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BUFFALO BILL'S STEEL-ARM PARADE FIVE CENTS

# THE BUFFALO BILL STORIES

A Weekly Publication devoted to Border History



# THE BUFFALO BILL



A WEEKLY PUBLICATION      STORIES      DEVOTED TO BORDER LIFE

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## BUFFALO BILL'S STEEL-ARM PARD;

OR,

## Old Weasel-top's Mission.

By the author of "BUFFALO BILL."

### CHAPTER I.

#### OLD WEASEL-TOP AND THE CHINK.

Old Weasel-top rode to the crest of the rise, where he drew rein. There, shading his eyes with his one good hand, he stared hard along the trail he had for some time been following.

The horse growing restive, he clutched the dropped rein with the steel hook which he used deftly in lieu of his missing right hand, and brought the animal with a jerk to a standstill.

"Whoa, you!" he said. "Ye ain't had enough desert travelin' yit, to take ther fire out o' ye—huh? Well, I reckon you'll git it before we come up with that Chink."

Before him were the tracks of four horses, making a well-defined trail, which even an inexperienced man could have followed. They led straight ahead, through a desolate region whose chief characteristics were rocky hills and sagebrush levels, with here and there acres of cactus, or mesquite, or manzanita scrub.

"Whar that Chink is goin' to with all that gold, if he had any gold, is what puzzles me!" Old Weasel-top went on, talking to his horse. "From the outlook, after follerin' him a half a day, it looks as though he was gittin' clean out o' the part o' the world that keers fer

gold. If he has any, he must have nigh a half a ton of it; that's what the Indian told me—that in the cache thar was a Mexican cartload of the stuff. Seems, sometimes, as if I must have been dreamin'. But thar was the cache, which this Chinaman had robbed; and whatever was in it he's got, on the backs of them horses.

He clutched the rein again in his left hand and rode on, studying the tracks of the four horses. One of the horses he knew was ridden by the Chinaman he was following; the other three were led horses, presumably loaded with gold taken from the cache he had mentioned.

For an hour or more Old Weasel-top rode on along that plain trail. Then he saw that it had "scattered"; the horses had, at that point, gone separate ways.

"Now, what does this mean?" he said, studying the tracks where they parted.

He swung down from his saddle for the purpose of a close inspection; then went forward along one of the trails, pulling his horse by the rein, through which he had hooked his steel "hand."

Suddenly he jumped back with a cry of fright.

A revolver had been poked at him over the top of a bush, and the head and body of a Chinaman came into view, the Chink having got the drop on Old Weasel-top with exceptional cleverness.

"You see um revolv'-heh?" said the Chinaman as his finger pulled on the trigger and the hammer of the revolver began to rise. "You thlow 'um hands up quick."

Old Weasel-top, stepping back with a snort of astonishment and fright, was not slow in obeying that command. A revolver will hurl missiles for a Chink quite as well as for a white man; and Weasel-top was not minded to have a lead mine started under his skin just then.

The Chinaman wore a coarse blue blouse, Chink trousers and shoes, and had his queue done in a neat coil under his dusty black hat, which was of American make. The revolver had a decidedly American and business-like air.

When Weasel-top had put up his hands, or rather had put up one hand and the steel hook which did duty for the other, the Chinaman came forward, pointing the revolver at his face; and proceeded with Oriental deftness to relieve him of his weapons.

When the Chinaman had buckled Weasel-top's belt round his waist, stowed the sheath knife in his blouse, and had taken possession of Weasel-top's Winchester and its ammunition, he ordered the man to sit down.

"We have talkee-talkee," he said; "we say many things, bumbly."

Then he took Weasel-top's horse, that had at first drawn back, but afterward had stood still, and leading it some distance away he tied it to a bush with the bridle rein.

Seated on the ground in painful obedience Old Weasel-top looked longingly at the horse as it was being led off; looked at the saddle holsters, in which two good revolvers rested; and at the pack of food and the water bottles on the animal's back.

The hopes he had held seemed to have fallen to pieces with a suddenness that bewildered him.

When the horse had been disposed of the Chink came back; having all the while kept the white man from jumping up and running, by threatening him with the revolver.

"Now we talkee," he said, dropping down cross-legged on the ground before his prisoner; "we have plenty much talkee—heh! You like talkee?"

He kept the revolver pointed at Weasel-top, with a finger on the trigger.

Old Weasel-top was so angered, as well as amazed, and so wholly irritated by what had occurred, that all these things, combined with his sense of self-condemnation, made it impossible for him to speak at once. He felt hot inside, his face burned, his bright blue eyes were staring, and his head was dizzy.

"You speakee Inglis, hey?" demanded the Chinaman. Weasel-top with difficulty found his tongue.

"Yes, o' course!" he grunted.

"Velly fine! I velly glad you talkee Inglis, for we make good understand, hey?"

"I reckon!" the white man grunted. "What do you want of me?"

"Right now wantee talkee Inglis. You see um revolv'?"

"Yes, I see it. But I'd ruther you p'inted it in another direction; fer, the way you're fingerin' it, it's li'ble to go off."

"It go off very quickee if white man not speakee up. Me got the dropee—hey?"

"Well, you have; I'll admit it."

"What you foller um trail for?"

"Which trail?"

"Oh, me know! You no can fool Wun Lung. You know me velly well, I think. Me undelstand white man; me live Flisco velly long time. Savvy? You Buff'lo Bill man."

The knowledge ought not to have surprised Old Weasel-top, but it did. This Chink knew he had been recently with Buffalo Bill, and so must have understood all along that he was coming on the trail in pursuit of the treasure which he supposed had been taken by the Chinaman from the cache.

"You with Buff'lo Bill when he findee Chinee smugglers, hey? Me know that so. You catchee many smugglers and Chineeman; Buff'lo Bill take um all same back, put um in jail Flisco. That velly bad for Chineeman; velly bad for smugglers. Then you come this way chop-chop—velly fast; you think Wun Lung gotee some gold on horse, and you gitee um. But you no gitee um. You wantee see where Wun Lung takee gold; you no can see."

"I reckon I ain't goin' to very fast, right now," Old Weasel-top admitted grimly.

"You go not at allee," said Wun Lung. "You see um rocks here? Spoil trail; no can foller um. You go Buff'lo Bil. You say, Buff'lo Bill go back chop-chop; you tellee him he no can find trail; velly much danger. Savvy?"

"You mean that you want me to return to Buffalo Bill and tell him that the trail played out and I couldn't do no more with it; and that that's so much danger out hyar he'd better go back himself?"

Wun Lung nodded his head in assent and approval, and a smile spread over his bland yellow face.

"Velly good!" he said. "You do that, me no killee."

"You'll kill me if I don't?"

A snarl grated in the throat of the Chinaman.

"Me killee um quick!" he cried. And there could be no doubt that he meant it.

A crafty look came into the blue eyes of Old Weasel-top.

"Well, gimme my horse back, and I'll vamose. I got to do it, I reckon."

The shrewd Chinaman saw and understood that look; it told him that the white man would obey just as long as he had to, and no longer. He smiled grimly.

Still holding, the revolver so that it covered Old Weasel-top, Wun Lung thrust a hand into the folds of his blouse and brought out a singular object, at which Weasel-top stared, having never seen anything like it.

The object resembled a combination of alarm clock and mirror, though the clock part, if that was what it was, was flat and saucer shaped. The mirror was where the face of the clock should be; and, instead of clock hands, there was a shining metal ball.

"You see um?" said the Chinaman, holding up this singular object. "Me make um go for you."

He dropped his revolver on his knees long enough to give a few twists to the key, setting the little ball in front of the mirror to whirling. It went round at a great rate, so that to watch it soon made the beholder feel dizzy.

Old Weasel-top looked at it curiously, however, observing that in the mirror his features were revealed.

"You see um ball go fast," said Wun Lung.

"Whatever is it fer?" asked Old Weasel-top.

"This Chinee plaything."

"Well, it looks it! But showin' it to me now is a waste o' time, seems to me; jes' go on with what we was talkin' about! I said I'd vamose if you'd gimme my horse and cast me adrift; and I meant it. I rec'nize that you've got the drop on me, and so I has ter do whatever you says."

But while making this protest he still stared at the mirror and the shining metal ball that spun in front of it, which the Chinaman had set on his knees by the side of the revolver.

"You Buff'lo Bill pard, heh?" said the Chinaman.

"Well, ye may call me that."

"What do with Buff'lo Bill?"

"What was I doing with him?"

"Yes; what do with Buff'lo Bill?"

"Well, it was jest acksdent, as yer may say, that I happened ter be with him. It come about through a Chinaman, and sent him huntin' Chinamen. But I wasn't mixed up in it furder than that; so you needn't look too blamed cross-eyed at me! I'm willin' to tell yer the whole thing, if you'll let me go when I do, an' gimme me my horse and weapons."

"Me give um all same horse and othel things," the Chinaman promised glibly.

"I reckon I've got ter trust ye fer that, hey? Well, I'll resk it! I'd been down thar by ther Twin Buttes, them two red sandstone hills that rises on the American side, clost by the Mexican line."

"You come hunt um smuggler?" demanded Wun Lung with an expression that almost terrified the white man.

"No, you're off there—I didn't!"

"You come Buff'lo Bill!"

"Yes, I did; but I was jest tryin' to explain to you how 'twas."

"Tell um all same truth."

"I'll do that, too; but you've got to let me go, if I do. You ain't got no cause to hold me."

The Chinaman looked as if he doubted that.

"I was in a town away north of the line, after I'd wandered round, and by chance run across a dead Chinaman, who had fell down and died in the desert. His name was Chin Loo, and—"

The snarl that broke from the throat of Wun Lung stopped the flow of the white man's words. But immediately the Chinaman ordered him to go on.

"It makes you mad jest ter hear that Chinaman's name, does it? Well, I don't wonder at that. He warn't no friend of yours, but was workin' for Buffalo Bill and the United States gover'ment. He had a message for Buffalo Bill, which I found in his blouse; and in that town I mentioned I give it to Buffalo Bill. That brought him down this way; and he corralled a lot of Chinamen that was bein' smuggled across the border, as well as the white men that was doin' the smugglin'."\*

Another snarl of rage from Wun Lung startled and frightened the speaker.

"But I wasn't in that, only by acksdent an' incidentally, as yer say say," Weasel-top declared, almost in a tone of apology.

"You with um Buff'lo Bill!" said Wun Lung fiercely.

"Yes; but I wasn't huntin' Chinamen."

"What um hunt?"

Weasel-top fidgeted.

"Well, I might's well say it, as I reckon you know. What I come down hyar fer, trailin' along with Buffalo Bill, was on account of a cache of gold that an Indian chief had told me about when he was dyin'. I went to the place whar he said it would be, a man named Lem Flagg goin' with me; but when we got thar we found only a hole in the ground, whar it had been; and a man that I thought was *you* was ridin' away through the scrub, leadin' some pack horses. After that, when I'd thought it over, I cut out by myself, to follow your trail; and that's why I'm hyar."

He believed that it would be worse than useless to tell anything but the truth, convinced that the Chinaman knew all about it; so he was trying to put the best face on it he could.

He expected another outburst as he made that confession; but the Chink apparently had known it was coming; at any rate, he made no comment; but only gave the "key" of the queer arrangement another turn, making the whirling ball whirl still faster.

Old Weasel-top had been looking at that spinning object even while he talked; and it was beginning to have a queer effect on him. For one thing, he seemed more and more willing to give up to this Chinaman even his most secret thoughts. Yet he did not notice it at the time.

Weasel-top went on, telling his story; with the Chinaman listening and nodding, and the ball spinning like a top.

"Yer see, altogether it's a queer case," he declared, in a tone of apology. "Fust place, I don't know who I am; but calls myself jest Old Weasel-top, because I'm w'arin' a weasel-skin cap, and somebody has called me that. When I told that to Buffalo Bill, he was inklined to think he'd met me before; said he'd met up with a man whose real name was Eben Calton, but who was called Ned Nobody, and Pima Wonder, on account of him havin' been a Pima medicine man, and not knowin' his name, er whar he come frum, same's me. It seemed that Ned Nobody had lost his right hand, and had a steel arm doin' work in its place; ag'in, the same as me.

"Yit I didn't recklect none of that, if't was me. All I recklected was that I was lost out in these parts somewhat and was nussed back to life by Indians, after I'd been found nigh dead in the desert; and that afterward a chief, who was my friend, got into a fight with another chief, and was wounded. I took the wounded chief and keered fer him, in a hut somewhat; fer which, when he was dyin', he told me about this cache of gold. He said it held a cartload of the yellow stuff; and he give me a sample."

He reached into his bosom, and from a pocket took out a nugget of gold.

"Me lookee!" said the Chinaman, snatching the gold away.

Old Weasel-top did not even grunt a dissent when Wun Lung, after that look, stowed the nugget in his blouse.

"I told Buffalo Bill about the gold," he went on, "but he didn't take no stock in the story. Then I cut out alone, and come this fur by myself."

"Buff'lo Bill he come too?"

"Bumby he may; er, if he don't, thar's a man with him that may."

\*See last week's issue, BUFFALO BILL STORIES, No. 420, "Buffalo Bill and Old Weasel-top."

"Who um man?"

"Lem Flagg."

Again that choking snarl gurgled in the throat of Wun Lung.

But now Old Weasel-top did not even note it; his eyes were glued upon the whirling ball of metal, having lost all power to look away; in his ears sounded a strange music, with which the words of the Chinaman mingled melodiously.

"Tell all um stoly," Wun Lung commanded.

Old Weasel-top went on, telling everything he could think of; he laid bare all that he knew of himself and his past, which was little enough. He struggled to think of more, that he might also tell that. He was completely under the spell of the Chinaman.

There was one part of his confession which seemed to rivet the Chinaman's particular attention; that was when he recounted the fact that Buffalo Bill had informed him that Ned Nobody, or Eben Calton, had a daughter, a beautiful young woman, named Ethel Calton.

"You know where um li'l girl is?" Wun Lung demanded.

"No, I don't," said Old Weasel-top; "and I dunno if thar is sech a girl, even."

Wun Lung asked other questions; but after a while the white man did not answer, though he heard every word which the Chinaman spoke.

Now and again Wun Lung gave the "key" a twist, to keep up the motion of the spinning ball. He stared at intervals into the face of the white man, and into the wide, open blue eyes, as if he searched for something there.

## CHAPTER II.

### PICTURES OF THE PAST.

Satisfied that the white man had reached the mental condition in which he most desired him to be, Wun Lung began now to speak to him, in a queer and penetrating singsong:

"White man go back to Buff'lo Bill; tell Buff'lo Bill no come here!"

Over and over again he said that, hammering it into the dulled but receptive mind of Old Weasel-top.

To all appearances, Weasel-top was in a state of unconsciousness. He sat up with strange rigidity, as if he had a board or rock at his back; his blue eyes were open, looking straight into the mirror and at the whirling ball of metal. His face had assumed a grayish pallor, and he seemed not even to breathe.

Over and over again Wun Lung said those words; over and over again.

Then he rose softly, stowed the shining thing in his blouse, and tiptoed softly away to the horse he had tethered. Getting the horse, he led it from the spot as quietly as he could; then mounted and rode off, increasing his speed in a short time.

Left alone, Old Weasel-top maintained that attitude of rigidity, staring straight before him.

But already he had forgotten the words so persistently hammered in by the wily Celestial; in his mind a strange vision was growing. Gradually taking shape and coherence, it became a series of memory pictures, in which

Old Weasel-top saw himself and others enacting scenes which he began to recognize as parts of his forgotten past.

They began with the events which Buffalo Bill had recalled to him. He saw himself in the home of the Pima Indians, with his daughter, a beautiful girl flowing into womanhood. He had wandered there, it seemed, following a mental lapse; and there his daughter had found him, after a long and wearisome search. Having been able to do some things considered remarkable by the Pimas, he had been made a medicine man, and was called the White Wonder. Buffalo Bill was there, too. There were fights between the Pimas and the Apaches, and many moving incidents. Then he discovered, after a while, that he, Ned Nobody, the White Wonder, was Eben Calton.

It was all long ago, it seemed to him.

This was succeeded by other pictures, which he felt were closer in time. In them he saw himself and his daughter in the desert lands of the Far Southwest. They had been making a trip to California. On their way back, by the southern route, they had thought to visit a ranchman in the valley of the Colorado, an old friend of the family; and had set out for his ranch on horses. They lost their way and wandered about in the desert. Then they were attacked by Chinese and Indians, who carried off the girl.

In this apparent dream, Old Weasel-top felt the thrill of it all; the fight and the girl's capture, and himself left lying for dead on the desert. He recalled how he had staggered up after his foes and his daughter were gone, and had tried blindly to pursue; how he had toiled on and on, until he fell fainting.

The next series of pictures thrown on the strange screen that seemed to have been set up in his brain showed a village of mud huts, occupied by Indians, to which he had been brought, and an Indian chief attending him.

In that village he had recovered his strength, but not his memory of the past, temporarily; he had forgotten about his daughter being carried away in that terrible manner.

Another series of pictures came and filled out the whole. In them he saw himself waiting on the chief, who was dying in another mud hut. There the chief told him of the wonderful cache of gold hidden at the Twin Buttes. Then came his experiences, quite recent, with Buffalo Bill and his party.

When the visions faded away Old Weasel-top fell forward on his face, with his mouth in the sand, and lay there a long time.

The afternoon sun was midway in its descent of the western sky when he came out of this stupor and sat up.

He looked about, dazed and bewildered.

Slowly he began to remember; bit by bit his past came back to him, as he had seen it in those mental pictures. It seemed strange at first, almost unbelievable; then it struck into his inmost soul with a conviction of truth, and roused him as thoroughly as if he had been given a blow in the face.

He leaped to his feet and looked round; he looked down at the ground, and searched for horse tracks.

"It's true!" he shouted. "True—true—true!"

He ran about like a crazy man.

He found the tracks of a horse; and then other tracks. The tracks which he recognized as having been made

by his own horse he began to follow, with a dogged blindness which recked not of the difficulties and dangers. Out there somewhere he saw, in imagination, his daughter struggling in the arms of the Chinaman, and he wanted to reach her immediately. He had no weapons, no food, nothing; but he ran and stumbled on.

He had run nearly a mile in this way when he came unexpectedly on the object of his immediate search—his horse. It was browsing; but seeing him it whinnied, and came toward him. He ran up to it, caught it by the bridle and looked it over, chattering his joy.

Suddenly he understood how it came to be there. The bridle was broken and the saddle was slightly askew. The Chinaman, riding away, had been thrown by the beast; and it had escaped from him. That this was so was proved by the revolvers in the saddle holsters.

Weasel-top drew out the revolvers, and saw that they were loaded; each held six cartridges, enough for a pinch; he could down many men with twelve cartridges, if in a corner and at close quarters. He clutched the revolvers as if they gave him a new lease of life.

His first impulse was to leap into the saddle and start in pursuit of the Chinaman; he was still all on fire with those memories and anxiety over the fate of his daughter. Even his face and his hands seemed burning as with a fever.

He spurred rapidly along the trail left by the Chinaman in the sand after the horse had thrown him; but quickly the trail was lost, where the sand ended and hard ground began, the sandaled feet of the Celestial showing there no traces.

When he could not pick up the trail, Old Weasel-top rode furiously back to the spot where the tracks of the Chinaman's horses had separated. These he tried to follow, one at a time; and had no better luck than before; he lost them in the hard ground.

While making these feverish and futile efforts he had a consciousness that he was putting himself in great danger, and he expected at every moment a shot that would tumble him out of the saddle; yet he could not desist, until he was forced to by his inability to hold to the trails.

"If only Buffalo Bill was hyar!" he fumed; "er Nomad, er Lem Flagg, er that Indian boy they calls Little Cayuse! I ain't no good at trailin'. And that Chink is pikin' straight ahead, to whar he has got my daughter; and I got ter stand it."

He was not only wearying himself, but tiring his horse; he had driven it here and there so furiously that it was covered with sweat and showed signs of excitement. Twice as he spurred it the horse jumped and came near unseating him, reminding him of what it had done to the Chinaman.

With his discovery of the futility of the efforts he was making, he began to come to the sensible conclusion that the best thing to do was to get the help of Buffalo Bill.

Buffalo Bill had said to him that he intended to follow Wun Lung just as soon as he had delivered his prisoners to the authorities at a certain point on the line, a town named Chico.

"I sh'dn't be surprised if Cody and his crowd air p'inted this way right now!" he mused, beginning to count the time. "They was to be at Chico day before yesterday. If they turned round at once, they'd be gittin' nigh whar the Twin Buttes stand. Flagg would

be with 'em, of course; Flagg really wanted to come with me when I left 'em, and would have but fer a sense o' duty. Flagg b'lives in that cache of gold story, and would foller Wun Lung reckless and hot footed; he said as much. Buffalo Bill don't believe in it p'tickler; but he wants Wun Lung jest the same, on account of the Chink bein' at the head of that smugglin' gang."

He swung his horse around.

"The only trouble is," he muttered, "maybe they ain't left Chico yit. But, anyway, I can't do nothin' alone; and the sooner I git help ther better. I got ter have help; got ter have some men that can pick up and foller a trail whar thar ain't one ter be seen; and they're ther men fer it. I'll hike back and find 'em."

### CHAPTER III.

#### AT THE EMPTY CACHE.

Lem Flagg stood up in the small hole, by the flat white stone, at a point nearly a mile below the red sand-stone hills called the Twin Buttes. The hole had been freshly excavated. Close by him were Buffalo Bill and Nick Nomad, with Little Cayuse. Near at hand were the horses, with bridle reins trailing on the ground to keep them from straying.

As Flagg stood up, he extended his hand, and revealed the shining nugget which lay on the hard palm.

"There's the proof, Cody, seems to me," he was saying. "This is the hole that me and Old Weasel-top found, where he thought the cache of gold ought to be; and when we found it, right off there we saw Wun Lung slidin' away through the cedars, ridin' one horse and leadin' three more. I reckon there can't be a bit o' doubt that he had got the cached gold here, and was carryin' it off."

Buffalo Bill took the nugget and examined it, with Nomad and Little Cayuse looking on.

"Er, waugh!" the old trapper grunted, surveying the hole in which Lem Flagg stood; "ef thet hole war plum full o' ther yaller metal thar war a heap of et!"

He had been unwilling to believe there had been any cache of gold.

"Old Weasel-top," said Flagg, "told me the Indian he got his information from declared there was a Mexican cartload of it."

"Waal, et plum looks et! Howsomever——"

"Oh, I ain't expectin' you to believe anything, you old cimiroon!" said Flagg. "I'm directin' my remarks to Cody. What do you make out of it? That's gold, ain't it?"

"Virgin gold," said the scout.

"So I thought."

"Jest erbout like ther nugget what Old Weasel-top showed," admitted Nomad. "I ain't sayin' et ain't."

"One swaller don't make a summer, I know," said Flagg; "but seems to me that is proof that gold was cached here. The Chink in his hurry overlooked that sample."

He began to scrape about in the hole with his feet, in the hope of turning up another nugget.

"It will certainly add to the interest of our pursuit of Wun Lung," the scout admitted, "if we can believe

that while he is running away he is taking a fortune in gold with him."

"He'd take it, all right, ef he could," said Nomad; "what a Chink like him wouldn't take would be only ther things he couldn't git his hands on. But I has sampled so many tall yarns about buried treasure an' ther like that I'm plum unbelievin' on ther subjeck. Yit this hyar air shore curious an' interestin'."

Suddenly Little Cayuse caught the scout by the coat and gave a tug.

"Pa-has-ka!" he said.

The scout turned; then looked in the direction of the Piute's pointing finger. A horseman had come in sight, riding through the cedars.

"Um Weasel-top," said Little Cayuse.

"You're right," declared the scout. "Flagg, Nomad, here comes the man we're talking about—Old Weasel-top!"

The horseman began to lash his horse into a faster gait when he beheld the men grouped at the empty cache.

"He's comin' as ef Injuns war chasin' him," commented Nomad.

"He certainly hasn't gone ahead on the trail of the Chinese, as he said he would," said Flagg, climbing out of the hole. "But perhaps he has jest come back to connect with us, and git a good start."

That this was so they learned when Old Weasel-top arrived; for almost his first words were exclamations of gratitude that he had found them, because of the assistance he wanted them to give him.

He slipped from the saddle, dropping the rein; he was tired, and so was his horse. Then he began to exclaim and explain.

"Glory halleluyer! You're the men I been dyin' ter see. Fer I want yer help in follerin' Wun Lung. But it ain't no more jest on account of the gold—the gold can go hang; it's on account of my daughter, that he has got in his power, as I feel sure now."

He talked like a crazed man for a few minutes, as he tried to tell quickly how he had been held up by Wun Lung and then made unconscious by him.

"I reckon his trick didn't work out the way he expected it would," he explained. "He told me to go back and say to Buffalo Bill that the trails couldn't be follered, and it would be plum too dangerous anyhow to risk tryin'. Well, they can't be follered—not by me; but I ain't a trailer, like all you fellers air. I reckon you could turn the trick. And that's why I flew back hyar ter git ye."

Buffalo Bill and the others began to ask him questions.

"I can't explain it more than that," he declared. "He bewitched me somehow with that whirling metal ball and his little lookin' glass, so that I told him everything, and promised him everything; and then when he went away I reckon I was asleep. Anyhow, I dreamed—seems like it was a dream; and in that dream my whole recollection of everything come back to me clear as daylight. Everything I had ever done seemed locked away like it was in a room; and what he done turned the key which opened that room, and I saw everything that was in it. That's ther best way I can explain it.

"What I know for certain now is, that my daughter was captured by some Chinamen who had Indians with 'em. She may be livin', er she may be dead; but I'm

goin' to find her, er find out what has happened to her. That's my one mission in life now. I'm appealin' to you ter help me, knowin' you'll do it. You're hyar ter foller Wun Lung, anyhow; and we can all go on together."

His face and his blue eyes took on a fierce expression.

"When we do come up with him," he shouted, "all I ask is fer you men jest to stand back, and gimme my way with him!"

They questioned him as to the distance he had covered.

"It's now about nine o'clock," he said, looking at the sun. "Well, when I hit the back trail it was along in the afternoon of yesterday. I couldn't come straight along all night, fer I'd have lost the trail; so when I couldn't foller it safe I camped right down on it; and then piked on as soon as I could see this mornin'. I reckon that a half a day's hard ridin' is about the distance."

Buffalo Bill had been deeply interested in Old Weasel-top's story. Assured long before that the man was really Ned Nobody, whom he had encountered once before, he was ready to try to understand the strange mental condition in which Weasel-top had been and credit the mental happenings which had come about since the Chinaman's spinning ball and mirror had unlocked the storehouse of his memory.

The scout glanced at the sun.

"We'll start now as soon as we can," he said. "Your horse is well blown, Calton; but I guess, with care, he'll make the day through. To-morrow morning, if we have luck, we can try to pick up the trails which you couldn't follow."

Old Weasel-top gave a yell of delight.

"Cody, you're the clean white article!" he declared. "But I knowed you was. I ain't keerin' p'ticklerly about that gold, if I can rescue my daughter; so, though I was powerful interested in it at fust, I'm willin', now that you men shall have all of it, if we git it, ter pay you fer helpin' me. I relinquishes all claim ter it, because of that."

"Er, waugh!" grumbled Nomad. "What kind er men does yer think we air, anyhow?"

"Well, that'd be a square deal!"

Buffalo Bill assured him that they were one and all more than delighted to help him in this matter all they could, and deserved no credit for it, nor any great thanks.

"For you see," he said, "we are following Wun Lung, and we shall follow him as long as there is the ghost of a chance of getting him. We have found that he is the real head of the Chinese smugglers of the Pacific Coast, with headquarters in the Chinese quarter of San Francisco. Some strange stories have come to us about him, in a letter I received while in Chico. He disappears and reappears in a strange way; sometimes he will be gone months, then he will be back for months in his old haunts.

"Two months ago a prospector came on some Chinamen down this way, but farther on, in Mexico. When they saw him they ran. His curiosity led him to follow them, and he found an Indian pueblo, where Chinamen and Indians were living together; he said he believed there were fifty Chinamen, and more than that number of Indians. The pueblo was one of those dried-brick structures such as the Indians of the Southwest build.

But he said that around it a stone-and-mud wall had been built, and newer houses were inside of that, together with what he took to be a Chinese joss house. He was afraid to get close enough to make out everything; and when he told his story in San Francisco he admitted that he didn't expect any one to believe him. But it got into the papers, and received a good deal of attention. A clipping from one of the papers was sent me, with the letter which told about it."

The blue eyes of Old Weasel-top were hot and shining again; when he took the clipping handed to him by Buffalo Bill he held it up with shaking fingers.

"It may be true!" he said, scraping at his forehead with the steel hook that served in place of his right hand. "And if it is so, maybe there is whar my girl is!"

"We shall certainly find her, if she is there," the scout told him, to cheer him, seeing how he was suffering.

"I'll fight my way through a thousand of the Chink fiends, if I can jest find the trail!" cried Old Weasel-top.

He looked earnestly at Buffalo Bill, when returning the paper.

"I can't make ye know jest how I feel about this," he said; "but when I think that all the time when I was wanderin' round not knowin' about myself, and wastin' time, she was thar with them Chinks and Indians mebby, it makes me wild; it makes me want wings, so I can fly right to her, and perfect her. Gentlemen, I can't make ye understand it."

"We understands et well ernough," said Nomad, all kindness now, where before he had been skeptical and repellent; "an' ef these hyar things turns out true, you'll find us backin' yer ter ther plum limit; that's whatever! We're yer pards through ter ther eend, from this on."

Old Weasel-top dabbed again at his sweaty forehead with his steel hook, while he held out his left hand to clutch and shake with the men who had declared that they were with him in this thing to the end.

None shook his hand more heartily than Buffalo Bill.

"Calton, you have our sympathy," was what he said; "and we'll do all that men can do for you and your daughter."

"Call me Old Weasel-top," was the answer; "it seems more natural, an' fits better; I been called it so long I'm used ter it, an' like it."

He went from one to the other until he came to the Piute.

"Little Cayuse," he said; "you air ther boss tracker, with a nose fer dim trails equal to any bloodhound's. I'm bankin' on you fer that work. I didn't know I had sech friends anywhars in ther world; but it's trouble makes everybody kin, white and red; so we're friend and pards!"

Buffalo Bill took a water bottle from a pack on the ground, together with some bread and jerked beef.

"Try this," he said, offering them to Weasel-top. "You'll stand the trip better."

He ordered Little Cayuse to give a part of the contents of one of the skin water bottles to Weasel-top's horse.

"Give the beast a bit of breathing spell, and a chance to fill up on grass. It's the best way, Weasel-top. We can reach the point where you lost those trails to-night, even if we stay here a bit longer, getting ready. And to-morrow morning bright and early we can pick up the tracks of Wun Lung."

Though Weasel-top could hardly be persuaded to eat, he drank greedily of the water and stowed away a few mouthfuls of the bread and meat.

Then he had to tell his story over again, and answer more questions, while they delayed to give his horse time to recover its wind and strength.

But though they thus delayed, while he was wild to go right back, they lost no time by it, reaching the point where Wun Lung had held up Old Weasel-top before darkness came down to prevent them from going farther.

That night Lem Flagg dreamed of finding the missing gold; and Old Weasel-top dreamed of finding his daughter. Buffalo Bill, Nick Nomad and Little Cayuse took turns in guarding the camp.

At the first streakings of day all were out, looking for the trails, even before they took time to cook and eat their breakfast.

## CHAPTER IV.

### PICKING UP THE TRAIL.

There were few if any trailers equal to Buffalo Bill, Nick Nomad and Little Cayuse. They had so trained their eyes that nothing escaped notice. Wun Lung had been exceedingly careful in making his get-away after his meeting with Old Weasel-top; he had smoothed out his tracks and those of the horses, sprinkling sand over them wherever they showed. It had been a well-blinded trail, impossible for Old Weasel-top to follow; but they read it as easily as a page of print.

They found where the four horses had been brought together, and where they had been tethered while Wun Lung went back to effect the capture of Old Weasel-top. To this point the Chink had come, when he had covered his trail, after being thrown by Weasel-top's horse.

From there the combined trail went on; though the Chinaman had made some clever attempts at hiding it—attempts which would have fooled Old Weasel-top, but did not in the least deceive the keen-eyed men now with him.

All that day, and all the next, Buffalo Bill led his party along the trail of those horses. Though the Chink had a good start, at the end of the second day the freshness of the tracks of his horses told that he was now not far ahead.

Before going into camp that evening, at a water hole which Wun Lung had used, Buffalo Bill prepared to climb a near by peak, for a look over the surrounding country, a thing he had done the evening before.

"Ther Chink shows signs o' bein' plum familiar with this locality, anyhow," Nomad remarked, after they reached the water hole and were preparing to go into camp. "All day he's foltered along the easiest levels; and hyar he knowed jest whar ter strike ther *aqua pura*."

"He was here about noon to-day," said the scout, as he inspected the tracks by the spring.

They were so fresh and clean-cut that it was not possible they could have been made many hours.

"Which goes ter show," added Nomad, "thet right at this minute he ain't but half a day's travelin' ahead of us."

"Maybe not so much," said Flagg. "Take a look at them hills right before us, Cody; seems to me they answer purty well to the descriptions in that letter of the place where the Chinks and Indians had their village. And this is about the right distance, accordin' to my reckonin'."

Buffalo Bill took out the letter which had been given him at Chico, and re-read the descriptions of the mountain range wherein the Chinese-Indian village had been seen.

"It's hard to say whether this is it or not," he said; "yet it seems likely it may be."

"Which, ef so," said Nomad, "et means that we're comin' purty soon ter clost quarters wi' 'em. This hyar looks like Injun country, ter me."

"It is Indian country," the scout agreed. "It was into these Mexican mountains, I think, that old Geronimo led his hostiles when American soil got too hot for them; and here he stayed three months, until the *rurales* crowded him from the other direction, when he headed north again."

They were within Mexican territory; yet that did not trouble them, as Buffalo Bill had a permit from the Mexican government, which authorized him to pursue Indians and outlaws whenever they crossed to Mexican soil from the American side of the line. The trail of Wun Lung had begun on American ground.

When they had talked the thing over, and decided to eat a cold "snack" rather than run the risk of fires, Buffalo Bill set out for the peak he had picked out as his observation hill.

It took him a good half hour to climb it, after he reached its base; and by that time the sun had set, so that shadows were gathering fast in the lower valleys. The peak itself still held the sun's red rays and burned like a pencil of fire.

Buffalo Bill climbed far up the side, that he might have a wide view.

While he was engaged in this he heard something rustle in the bushes before him.

He thought he had started a Mexican deer, and stood looking, to see if it would not jump out of its cover.

Then he saw the bobbing head of a man, who stooped low as he ran through the bushes in a hasty effort to get away.

Only the head, neck and back of the shoulders were visible, and but for a moment; but the scout made out a Chinese queue and a blue blouse.

The discovery gave him almost a start.

"He saw me," was his conclusion, "and ran when he thought I was coming straight toward him; which would seem to prove that he was up here as a spy, and no doubt observed us go into camp down there. Well, it shows that we're getting close to the Chinks—closer than we thought. I begin to respect the writer of that letter; maybe his yarn had a good deal more truth in it than I was at first disposed to believe."

The running Chinaman disappeared almost as soon as seen, and though the scout stood watching for him to reappear he was not observed again; nor, from that point, was it possible to tell what course he had taken.

It was too late to follow the trail left by the Chinaman. Buffalo Bill therefore descended hastily to the camp, where he told of what he had discovered.

The effect on Old Weasel-top was such as to make it appear that he was going insane; he wanted to hurry

straight to the point where the Chinaman had been seen, pick up the trail there, and follow him to the village, which it seemed must be near.

"That would be useless. The thing to do is to shift our camp, as soon as it is dark enough to hide our movements," the scout told him. "The chances are that if we don't we may be surprised in the night. I'm willing to admit that *some* Chinamen can fight, and we don't care to be caught napping."

"Et ain't posseble ter do any trailin' now," Nomad declared, when Old Weasel-top continued his anxious declarations. "Cody's got ther sense o' et, as he allus does. Buffler succeeds, because he knows how ter succeed; and ef you're as anxious as I know yer air ter git ter whar yer daughter is, you'll do whatever he tells yer. Waugh!"

"I reckon that couldn't been old Wun Lung himself?" said Lem Flagg. "If't was, then it may merely show that we have crowded him close, and that he went up on that hill for a look round?"

"As I didn't see the Chinaman's face, I can't be positive on that score," the scout answered; "yet in my opinion that was not Wun Lung."

"Didn't run like him, hey?"

"No. And this was a smaller man, I thought."

They sat about on the ground, themselves and their horses concealed as well as it could be done by the bushes, while they ate cold grub, and the horses nibbled at the grass near the spring. The high hill where the Chinaman had been encountered still held the light, but the shadows were thick now over all the lowland.

"I allow we're in Chink territory, all right," Nomad agreed, "ef what was writ in that letter and newspaper article is ter be believed. Et looks like Injun ground, ter me."

"You'll pick up that trail on the hillside the fust thing in the mornin', I suppose?" was Old Weasel-top's anxious inquiry.

"We will; unless, in the meantime, something turns up to change our plans."

"We may have a scrimmage with 'em ter-night, ef that yaller-face gits in an' makes his report to his village," said Nomad, as if he wished the scrimmage might come.

"We'll try to avoid that, by quietly shifting camp as soon as it is a little darker," Buffalo Bill told him.

"There's five of us," said Flagg, "and accordin' to them reports, Cody, there's anywhere between fifty and a hundred of the Chinks and Indians. I'm supposing we're gittin' close to 'em, you know!"

"Er, waugh!" snorted the old trapper. "One good white man, that ain't afraid ter fight, is wuth any dozen Chinks."

"And Indians?"

"He's wuth all ther reds yer kin stack up, give him good fightin' ground, plenty amminition, and a rock or clift at his back."

"Of course, we know you're a wild cat fer fightin' an always hungry fer a scrap, you ole cimiroon!" said Flagg with a laugh, though no one appreciated the trapper's remarkable abilities more. "What I'm talkin' about is common men, like Cody, an' me, and Weasel-top, and Little Cayuse. We don't keer to go up/ag'in more'n a half a dozen apiece; while here we're goin' to have some twelve er fifteen apiece ag'in us, accordin' to the count."

"Er, waugh!" snorted Nomad again, not sure but that Flagg was poking fun at him.

"But what's on my mind," added Flagg, "is that gold!"

"Oh, let the gold go!" cried Weasel-top. "What I'm worryin' about is my daughter. I was thinkin' about it every minute as we trailed along to-day. She may be alive; an' she may be dead. If she's alive, I'm goin' ter rescue her; and if she's dead I'm goin' to avenge her. I ain't got but one mission in life now; and that's it. I may go under this trip; but I'm prayin' that I don't before I find out about that and take a lot of the fiendish Chinks and reds with me."

His words trembled.

"That's my mission now," he said, his voice rising; "my mission—my mission!"

"Keep your words down, Weasel-top!" the scout cautioned. "One never knows where some scout or spy of the enemy may be; or whether there may not be a force out in the hills right now, trying to locate us. They might have us at a disadvantage, if they jumped in on us now, as we sit here in the darkness."

"We know how yer feels, Weasel-top," remarked Nomad, sympathetically; "and we're wi' yer ter ther finish!"

"Thank you for that!" Weasel-top responded fervently. "I have a feelin' that we're goin' to win out in this thing; I've had it ever since my memory came back to me. It's a wonderful heartener, that feelin'."

"I sh'd think it would be," agreed Nomad. "I allus makes myself feel that erway, anyhow, when I'm comin' up ter a tussle wi' reds er other inimies; and I finds I gin'rally wins out."

"With the help of Cody!" said Lem Flagg, still as if inclined to jest at the expense of the old trapper, though no man more really appreciated Nomad's excellent qualities and high courage.

But Nomad was not put out by that.

"I admits et," he said; "I admits all of et! Buffler forever! Without my ole pard hyar I wouldn't be anything, an' nobody knows et better. Yit I opine et's ther same wi' a good many other men, some of 'em clost erround me at this minute."

Flagg laughed good-humoredly at this thrust.

"You're right, Nomad," he admitted; "Cody is a man that's all to the good."

"I'm everlastin' right, when et comes ter that!"

"But about that gold?" said Flagg. "You all seem to be overlookin' that."

"We ain't plum knowin' that thar is any gold!" Nomad objected.

"Well, you've seen two nuggets of it!"

"Two nuggets don't make a cartload cache any more than two swallers make a summer."

"Two swallers make heap drunk sometimes," put in Little Cayuse; then wondered why it was that the white men laughed.

"I reckon you're the humorist of the Piute nation," Flagg commented. "But let's git back to that gold ag'in. What I'd like to know is, did Wun Lung take it into the village, if the village is here? To put it in another way, would he do such a thing? Though there was a cartload of it, that's no reason he'd want the rest of the Chinks to know about it, and have a share in it. I'm figgerin' he'd cache it again somewhere before he went into that village."

"Er, waugh! Gold shore sets every man crazy that thinks of et," said Nomad, "an' now et's gittin' you, Flagg. We dunno that he had any gold; we dunno that thar reely is a village; ner we don't know that he war p'intin' fer one, ef thar is one. When we knows more we'll be wiser, and when we're wiser we'll know more; that's erbout all anybody kin say now."

Buffalo Bill did not make a move until darkness was heavy over all the lowland; then he had the horses' hoofs muffled with strips of blanket and led them quietly away from the spring.

The party passed over half a mile of ground before a stop was made.

"This is far enough, I guess," said the scout. "If they rush the supposed camp by the water hole we can hear them here, and they'll have their trouble for nothing."

They camped down with as little noise as possible. The horses, with hoofs still muffled, were put on picket ropes close by, and were fed grain from one of the packs, that they might not need so much grazing during the night.

"I'm wonderin' ef I could smoke up a bit," said Nomad, drawing out his pipe and fingering the black bowl. "What does yer think, Buffler?"

"I think it's all right."

He took out his own pipe, and the others imitated him; but that was all the luxury indulged in that evening; no fires were lighted, and what they ate and drank was cold.

They sat up an hour or so, talking in low tones, while they smoked and planned what to do in case the Chink-Indian village was close at hand.

Then the night was divided into watches.

Flagg took the first watch; and the others prepared to get all the sleep they could.

## CHAPTER V.

### FLAGG MISSING.

When Buffalo Bill awoke at midnight, to take Flagg's place, the latter was gone.

It had been Flagg's duty to stand guard until midnight, when he was to arouse the scout; but in that he had failed. Yet Buffalo Bill awoke promptly at twelve. It was as if there was an alarm clock set in his brain, put there by long habit.

He knew that the time was midnight when he looked at the stars; and the fact that he had not been aroused made him think at first that Flagg had fallen asleep at his post of duty. That happens often, to men not accustomed to standing guard; the darkness and monotonous silence make them drowsy, and before they know it they fall asleep.

Buffalo Bill was too cautious a man to take this for granted in the present case, however. So he lay quite still; but, though motionless, every faculty was alert. He heard the deep breathing of Nomad near him, the occasional restless tossing of Old Weasel-top, and even the light respiration of the Indian boy; but nothing of Flagg. A little farther off sounded the "ruh—ruh" of one of the horses, grazing; a sound that seemed very loud in the deep stillness.

At length the scout arose quietly, crept over to the place where Flagg had been stationed, and there looked about.

There could be no doubt that Flagg was gone.

Instead of at once arousing the others, Buffalo Bill took Flagg's place, standing guard in the darkness, while he listened.

"He may have heard something and has gone out to prospect round; if so, he will be coming back soon."

But Lem Flagg did not come back soon, nor at all.

By and by, when it became apparent that Flagg was not to be expected immediately, Buffalo Bill awoke Nomad.

"Hist!" he whispered. "No need to arouse the rest."

But Nomad, who had been in a deep sleep, came out of it with a flounce that started up both the Piute boy and Old Weasel-top. Little Cayuse merely sat up, looked about, and said nothing; but Old Weasel-top broke into a flood of questions.

"Keep quiet!" the scout commanded. "I don't know what it means; but Flagg is gone."

That brought Nomad to his feet with a low "whoof" like the suspicious snort of a bear. The others scrambled up at the same time. Weasel-top still went on asking questions.

"I awoke at midnight," the scout explained, "and found that Flagg was not here. I've waited now nearly an hour, and he hasn't returned."

"Cain't be treachery—in Flagg?" said Nomad, looking about.

"Of course not."

Little Cayuse stooped, with eyes close to the ground, at the point where Flagg had been on guard, trying to read the "sign."

After a moment of hesitation Buffalo Bill struck a match under cover of his hat, and stooping with it by the side of the Piute he, too, began to look about.

"Ugh!" little Cayuse grunted, pointing to tracks.

"Your eyes are good, boy!" commented the scout.

"Him go that way," said the Indian boy, pointing.

"Yes, the direction we came from. Probably he went back to the spring."

"What would he do that fer?" asked Weasel-top.

"Mebbe he heard suthin' over thar," Nomad suggested.

"See what you can find," said Buffalo Bill to the Piute, blowing out the match.

Little Cayuse obeyed by starting off, his lithe form bent far over, his keen eyes trying to see before him through the darkness.

When he had gone all stood listening until the soft "scuff" of his moccasins died out.

"He'll go to the spring and look around there," the scout told them. "But I'm afraid he will not find anything."

"We're feelin' cert'in that Flagg is ther clear quill," said Nomad. "I ain't never seen nothin' ter make me believe diff'rent."

"It's queer, though, that he should leave the camp without letting me know that he meant to," said the scout.

"Thet's so, too; but I'm gamblin' that he heard suthin' which called him out. He may have landed in er hull bunch er trouble, too, by doin' et; ye cain't tell."

They stood listening and talking until the Indian boy came back, more than half an hour after his departure.

"Him no there," he reported. "Nothing do at spring;

but me strike um match and find many tracks—heap many."

"What kind er tracks?"

"Chink tracks, Injun tracks, heap many. Um been there by spring in dark."

"Er, waugh! Then ther Chinks and Injuns did come down thar, thinkin' ter find us nappin'. I reckon this hull thing's as clear as daylight now, Cody. Lem Flagg heard 'em off thar, and went ter see what et meant; and they jest raked him in."

The effect of the revelation of the Piute boy was most marked on Old Weasel-top. The statement that Chinks and Indians had been at the spring, as the tracks showed, was proof to his mind that they were close upon the village mentioned in the scout's letter. If that were so, probably they were near Old Weasel-top's daughter, if, as he hoped, she was still alive.

"Couldn't we foller that trail to-night?" he asked, nervously drawing out and fingering one of the heavy holster revolvers he still possessed. "We can't afford to waste time here waiting for daylight."

"Yer didn't see no sign o' er a trap havin' been set round thar, I reckon?" said Nomad, addressing Little Cayuse. "'Twould be er boss place fer ther like o' that, I'm figgerin'."

But Little Cayuse had seen nothing of the sort.

He had followed the tracks as far as he could, which was only to the end of the soft ground round the spring. He could do no more in the darkness, as he had feared the risk of striking many matches.

"Flagg may have come on them without their discovering him," conjectured the scout, "and may even at this minute be following them. In which case, we'll get ahead faster by staying here until he has time to report than we would by trying to pick up that trail in the night. We'd have to flash matches, and couldn't get along very fast even then, with the chances big that they would discover us. It would be easy for them to lead us into a trap, too, if they saw us by the light of the matches we should have to use."

They sat down to await the return of Flagg, still talking in low tones.

But Flagg did not return, and the night passed without further sleep for any of them.

As soon as it was light enough Buffalo Bill took Little Cayuse and went to the spring, leaving Nick Nomad at the camp with Old Weasel-top and the horses, one needing to be guarded as much as the other. In his excited state, due to anxiety about his daughter, Weasel-top was likely to be a dangerous encumbrance where careful work was required.

Buffalo Bill found at the spring the footmarks discovered by the Piute boy in the night. There was every indication that the Chinks and Indians had made a careful advance upon the spot where the camp of the scout was supposed to be, and then had rushed it quietly. They must have been bitterly disappointed at finding no one there.

Soon Buffalo Bill came on a discovery, to which he called the Piute's attention. It was the track of a boot in the soft soil.

"Um Flagg!" said Little Cayuse, his black eyes snapping.

"Yes, Flagg has been here, and he made that track after the Chinks came, for you can see that his step overlaps the mark made by a Chink sandal."

The scout supposed at first that Flagg had reached the spring after the departure of the Chinks and Indians, and had followed them; but when he and Little Cayuse picked out this trail carefully, they found indications too plain to be denied that Flagg had been captured. The ground was torn up, where he had set his feet, with many evidences of a struggle.

To the experienced eyes of the scout the story told by those marks in the soil was plain as the printed page of a book.

Little Cayuse stood by, breathing heavily, his eyes roving round, as the scout commented on his find.

"They laid for him here, and snaked him in. He made his fight in trying to get away. We were all sleeping too soundly at that time to hear it, if much noise was made; but, probably, there was very little."

"Him prisoner!" said the Piute.

"Yes, they've got him!"

"They kill um, you think?"

"I can't tell that, Little Cayuse. But we'll hope not."

"Um Chink very bad man."

"That's right. Wun Lun is as desperate a rascal as they make 'em!"

"Um Injun bad man, too."

"Probably. If we judge by the company they keep they're as bad as the Chinks."

The scout began to follow the tracks, which at that point were very plain. The Indians and Chinamen had come to the spring on foot. Close about the spring prints of moccasins and sandals were mingled in much confusion; but out beyond they came together, making a plain trail which led toward the mountains looming before. It seemed clear that after having captured Flagg they had retreated hastily into the mountains.

"Of course, if they did, they left spies along the trail," the scout remarked. "But we'll go a little farther, and see what we can discover."

They discovered nothing of much consequences in addition. The trail led on toward the mountains, becoming broken, and difficult to follow when the hard and sterile ground was reached.

The evidence was so clear that the Celestials and their Indian allies had hiked for their mountain home that Buffalo Bill and Little Cayuse turned back to carry this information to Old Weasel-top and Nomad.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE PACHECO CHIEF.

Buffalo Bill and Old Weasel-top were making their way, mounted, along a hog-back which gave them a view into a valley lying far below them. Through the trees they had caught sight of whitewashed mud houses, forming an Indian-like village, which was, no doubt, the settlement they sought.

Little Cayuse and old Nick Nomad, being also mounted, had gone in the opposite direction, to see what they could discover, a meeting place having been agreed on.

Old Weasel-top was better armed than he had been. He had now a strap carbine slung round his shoulders, and a knife in his belt, in addition to his big revolvers.

The carbine and knife had been uncovered near the spring, where they had been concealed by some one who apparently intended to return for them. As a belt of cartridges was with the carbine, Old Weasel-top looked on the find as a godsend. It armed him more completely for the fray he foresaw.

"You'll find that when it comes to fightin' you can depend on me, Cody," he had said in a manner to show he meant it, and if any doubt had existed on that point it would have been dispelled by one look into his fiery blue eyes.

"I've jest got one mission in life now, Cody," he declared again, "and that is to rescue my daughter, and avenge her if she's gone under. My own life don't count fer nothin' now. Seems strange and unbelievable that all the while I was roamin', round not knowin' even who I was, she was hyar likely, needin' me! I allus had a feelin' that thar was suthing I *must* do at onct, but couldn't remember what it was, and it was that. I'm prayin' now that I ain't too late. You remember my daughter, Cody? You told me so onct, at a time when I didn't remember her myself."

"A beautiful and lovely girl she was, too!" the scout assented.

"I reckon there never was any that was any better," said Weasel-top. "I jest want to come face to face with Wun Lung. He won't have *any* lung when I git through with him."

But Old Weasel-top, fierce though his desires were, had gained control of himself in large measure, now that the time for self-control was at hand. He talked no more of wild Malay rushes into the midst of foes. He saw that if he served his daughter, whom he supposed now to be in that village, something more than mere wild fighting would be required. Caution, craft and excessive care were needed even more than the ability to fight.

The glimpses had now and then of the whitewashed houses did not stir him out of the calm he had assumed, as once they would have done.

Buffalo Bill had brought Old Weasel-top with him because he feared to trust him with Nomad and the Piute boy; but he saw, with delight, that Weasel-top no longer needed much watching.

"How we're goin' to git into that place is the thing I've been puzzlin' over," said Weasel-top as they rode slowly along. "It'll have to be done by night, I reckon, so long as the occupants outnumber us a dozen er more to one."

They had stopped their horses at a point where the white houses could be seen through a break in the trees, and were talking of this, when the scout discovered that a horseman was approaching.

"An Indian!" he announced. Weasel-top bent forward in his saddle, shaded his eyes with his good left hand, and looked in the direction of the scout's pointing finger. The Indian soon came out into an open glade, where he could be clearly seen.

"He's carryin' a white flag!" said Weasel-top.

"Which means that he wants to parley."

"Then he must have seen us some time back!"

"What he is doing proves it; and suggests, too, that down in the village our presence here is known. I'm wondering that they didn't try an ambuscade rather than this."

"Shall we ride forrud ter meet him?"

"Yes; it's a good idea."

They rode forth, and on reaching open ground drew rein. Seeing them do this the Indian kicked his horse into a faster gait and came on until he was within a few yards, when he, too, halted.

His flag was a strip of white buckskin tied to a pole. He lifted it and waved it round his head as he drew his horse in.

Buffalo Bill and Old Weasel-top urged their horses on again, drawing rein when they were close upon the redskin.

He was a fine specimen of the American Indian. His clothing was beaded and quilled, feathers were in his hair, about his waist was a belt holding a knife, and a carbine was slung by a strap round his shoulders.

He cast down the white flag when he saw that the white men showed amiable tendencies, and drove his horse on until he sat facing them.

"How?" he cried, holding up his open palm.

The scout put up his hand in the same fashion, this being a sign of peace, and cried back to the redskin in the same way.

"What white man do here?" said the Indian.

"We'd like a talk."

"Make palaver, hey?"

"Yes, that's what we want."

"How many white men?"

The scout did not care to be explicit on this point; but the manner in which the question came made him think the occupants of the village did not know how many white men there were. It was good policy if that were so to keep them in ignorance of the fact that the whites were so slender a company.

"How many white men?" the Indian repeated.

"Heap many!" said Buffalo Bill. "We've got the whole American nation behind us."

"White man lie!" spat out the Indian.

"Well, if you know all about it, you can do the answering yourself," Buffalo Bill declared, his face flushing. He did not like to be called a liar, even by an Indian like this.

"I suppose you are a chief?" he added.

"Me heap big chief!"

The Indian drew himself up proudly.

"Me heap big chief, too!" cried the scout, knowing that it was necessary to impress the rascal.

"Me know. Um Pa-has-ka—Long-Haired White Chief. Me know. Who him?"

He pointed to Old Weasel-top.

"He is Pa-has-ka's pard."

The Indian regarded curiously the steel hook that did service for Weasel-top's right arm.

When Weasel-top swung it up to exhibit it the chief ducked as if he feared the thing might discharge a bullet. He had never seen anything like it.

"Yes, that's very dangerous," said the scout gravely. "It is made to tear, like the eagle's talons. What is the name of the big chief who has come out to speak to us?"

"Lion Tail," was the proud reply.

"Lyn' tale. I guess that's right!" muttered Old Weasel-top. "I'mbettin' you're the boss liar of the universe."

"What village is that down there?" the scout inquired.

"My village," said Lion Tail.

"What tribe?"

"Pacheco."

"I've heard of the Pachecos; they're American Indians that came over into Mexico some years since, when the horse soldiers crowded them too hard!"

The chief frowned.

"What white man do?" he demanded.

"We're looking for a Chinaman, whose trail we've been following, and we understand that Chinamen live down there with the Pachecos."

"Long Hair no go 'way, Pacheco kill!" the chief threatened.

"We're looking, too," the scout went on, "for a white man who was captured last night by Indians and Chinese down by the spring, on the other side of these hills."

"White man no go 'way?" said the chief, as if he did not hear this.

"When we have accomplished what we came for we'll be ready to go away. But I want to say to you, chief, that we didn't come here to war on the Pachecos, and won't, unless we have to."

"Pacheco heap many," said the chief scornfully.

"That may be; but we haven't come to war on them. We followed a Chinaman here. Perhaps you know him—no doubt you do. His name is Wun Lung, or that is the name we know him by. He has been smuggling Chinamen into the United States, and we want him for that. We have come a long trail to get him."

"Ask him about my daughter," whispered Old Weasel-top, fidgeting nervously in his saddle.

"In just a minute," the scout answered in a low tone.

The chief regarded him suspiciously, having observed the whispering, without understanding what was said.

"We have come a long trail," the scout repeated to the chief, "to get this Chinaman, Wun Lung."

"Will white men go 'way?" the chief shouted angrily.

He dug his heels into his horse and came still nearer, his face showing plainly his wrath.

"White man not go 'way quick Pacheco kill um!" he shouted.

"Hold on, chief!" said the scout, lifting his hand. "We've got to talk this over, and you must understand that we're armed!"

He put his hand down and touched his revolver significantly.

"Chief come out here for palaver," he added; "and that is what we want—we want a talk with the great Lion Tail."

The Indian had dropped his hand to his tomahawk. It had not been seen before, but now it seemed to leap up into his hand, beside his sheath knife.

Buffalo Bill saw that Lion Tail was in an ugly mood, which proved that the Indian considered his village impregnable and his warriors more than able to cope with the white men who had come against them. If the chief had thought otherwise he would have been more pliant, even suppliant. An Indian is truculent and threatening only when he thinks he has the power on his side. Yet here was something significant—the fact that the chief had deigned to come out for a palaver. Perhaps, the scout thought, he had by chance merely seen the white men, and had ridden to them; yet that hardly explained the white flag, which he must have secured somewhere.

While these thoughts ran through the scout's mind he

was considering how best to approach the subject of the girl who was supposed to be held a prisoner in the village. He concluded that the straight way was as good as any.

"There is another thing, chief," he said, "and that is the white girl who is held in yonder village. She is the daughter of the man who is here with me, and we want her."

The face of the chief blackened with a scowl, betraying that the scout had struck home, yet he denied instantly that there was a white girl held there as a prisoner.

The scout noted the twist he gave to his denial.

"There is a white girl there, then, who is *not* a prisoner?" he said. "Well, we want her, for she is the daughter of this man, and he has come a long trail to get her."

Old Weasel-top's face was working strangely, and he had hard work to hold himself in check, in spite of his recent good resolutions.

The chief hesitated, then suddenly he drove his horse in between that of the scout and the one ridden by Weasel-top, flashing his tomahawk as he did so, on his face a murderous look.

What followed came with the quickness of lightning.

As the treacherous redskin tried to hurl his tomahawk at Buffalo Bill Old Weasel-top's steel arm shot out and pulled the rascal backward from his horse, the steel taking hold of his clothing. The startled horse gave a sidewise jump as it felt the form of the chief leaving its back, and the next moment Lion Tail hit the ground with a thud that knocked the breath out of him.

Before he could get up Buffalo Bill was also on the ground, his revolver covering the Indian.

"Move hand or foot, and I'll put a bullet through you, you red scoundrel!" he shouted, thoroughly angered by Lion Tail's dastardly attempt on his life. "You came out here under a white flag for a palaver, and now try to do me with your hatchet!"

"Shoot him!" yelled Old Weasel-top. "Pump him full o' lead!"

The steel hook had torn out as the Indian landed on the ground.

The rage that had been in Lion Tail's face melted away when he saw that deadly revolver muzzle looking down at him. In its place came a cringing expression.

"No shoot!" he begged.

"I ought to—I ought to bore a hole through you, but I won't, for that would be too much like murder. But I'm going to talk to you now, and you'll answer or have your head blown off."

Buffalo Bill knew how to threaten effectively, when he had such a redskin to deal with him.

"Shoot him—shoot the devil!" exclaimed Old Weasel-top.

He even drew out one of his own revolvers, as if he would do it himself.

"Let me settle with him," the scout urged; "but you stand there with a pistol ready, and give it to him if he tries to run."

"Me no run!" said Lion Tail meekly.

"You're sensible in that. Weasel-top, get hold of his horse and tie up ours, so that they won't make trouble."

Weasel-top hurried to do this while the scout kept the chief covered. When he came back, Lion Tail was showing a disposition to "palaver" in a manner more

pleasing to the scout and more conducive to his own good health and longevity.

Old Weasel-top, standing by, seemed to want to dig that steel hook into the scared Indian, and that frightened the chief even more, for he read the look in the face of the angry one-armed man.

"Me good Injun!" he pleaded.

"You're coming to your senses, I see," said the scout. "Now, I'm going to ask you some questions, and you'll answer them with a straight tongue, if you don't want to go traveling over the long trail. You see, we know a good deal about you and that village already; about the Chinamen who live with you, and about this white girl who is there, so that you can't deceive us."

"Me good Injun!" said the chief abjectly.

"Prove it, by speaking the truth. Wun Lung lives down there in that village?"

It seemed that Lion Tail did not know Wun Lung by that name; but he understood who was meant, and answered glibly enough now that the Celestial made his home much of the time with the Pachecos.

He admitted, too, in answer to the next question, that there were a number of Chinese making their homes with the Pachecos. Some, it seemed, had married Pacheco women and had been there a long time.

"The white man who was captured last night by the spring—he is there, too?" the scout asked.

Lion Tail admitted it.

"And now about the white girl! She is there?"

"Yes; white girl there!" Lion Tail confessed.

Old Weasel-top gave such a yell that the chief, thinking he was about to be attacked, reached for his knife to defend himself with it.

But he saw instantly that the white man who had the strange arm with a hook on the end of it instead of a hand did not mean to jump at him, but was dancing round in a transport of uncontrollable joy. When this white man turned his face to the chief it was seen to be covered with tears.

"Halleluyer! Cody, she's livin'! My little girl is livin'!"

As soon as Old Weasel-top could control himself he began to hurl furious questions at the chief, who looked at Buffalo Bill for their interpretation, as Old Weasel-top spoke so fast the Indian could not understand him.

"He wants to know if the girl is well?" said the scout.

"White girl plenty well!" answered the Indian glibly.

"Whoop!" shouted Weasel-top. "Ask him her name, ef he knows it, but it must be my daughter!"

He bent forward to listen.

"What do you call this young white woman?" demanded Buffalo Bill.

"The White Lily."

"But her other name? What does she call herself?"

The chief did not know that.

"She is not a prisoner?"

"She all same free."

## THE BUFFALO BILL STORIES.

"Then, why does she stay there?"

The chief hesitated.

"Why does she stay there?" the scout repeated.

"Big Chinee man," said the chief.

"It's Wun Lung, as I thought," cried Weasel-top.

"Thar's a heathen I'm goin' ter rip into fiddle strings jest as soon as I come up with him."

"Is she the big Chinese's wife?" Buffalo Bill asked, at the suggestion of Old Weasel-top.

The chief nodded.

"I'll wade in blood to my bridle-bits but I'll git at that heathen," said Old Weasel-top, now in a transport of rage. "Cody, did you hear that? She's been forced to become the wife of that heathen Chinee!"

Buffalo Bill continued to question Lion Tail, asking the questions suggested by Old Weasel-top. But already they had secured about all the information of value they could.

Having forced the chief to answer questions until there seemed to be no more to ask, Buffalo Bill held him quiet by threatening him with a revolver while Old Weasel-top took a riata from one of the saddles and prepared to tie him.

Buffalo Bill then compelled the chief to mount to the back of his own pony, and held him there with the revolver while Weasel-top roped him with the riata and tied his feet under the pony's belly, so that, when the tying was completed, the chief lay on the pony in a bent-forward position, with his legs hanging down and lashed together at the ankles.

Lion Tail was a very humble Indian by this time. He had made promises, and he stood ready to make as many more as might be wanted. He had declared that, seeing the white men, he had come on his own hook to have a palaver, using as a flag a piece of white buckskin which his squaw was intending to embroider and make into ceremonial moccasins. The Chinese and Indians in the village knew nothing about it.

Thus it was disclosed that he had vaingloriously attempted to frighten the white men away, or learn what they were there for, and had sadly overreached himself. The trouble was, that never before had he encountered just this type of white men, his dealings with the race having been chiefly with Mexican peons, who were usually half Indian and would run like frightened sheep at the very mention of a hostile. He had been given a tremendous and unpleasant surprise, and he would never forget it.

After he was tied and helpless on the back of his pony his black eyes followed the movements of Buffalo Bill whenever the latter was in the range of vision, for he had come to know that Buffalo Bill was the leader here and the man to be feared. He had heard Pa-has-ka spoken of as a "heap big white man," and now he was experiencing the proof of it.

"What um do with Injun?" he inquired anxiously.

Buffalo Bill had been asking himself that question.

The time was now well past noon. Little Cayuse and Nomad were some distance away. And if an attempt to enter the village was made it could not be before night. The scout stood thinking the matter over, hardly hearing the running fire of Old Weasel-top's comment.

"I don't know," he said at last, "but that this is the best thing that could have happened. If this rascal can be believed, he is a big chief among those Indians. Even if he is but a sub-chief, or a warrior, he has friends there. It may be a good idea to send word into the village that we have captured him, and offer to exchange him for your daughter and Flagg. We might even force them to deliver up Wun Lung, to secure his release. I think it will be worth a trial."

"I was thinkin' of that myself," admitted Weasel-top. He looked at the sun anxiously.

"It might be done yit to-day," he said. "I'd like to try it as soon's we can, ye see; fer if that is my daughter, I'd like to git her out o' the clutches o' them fiends quick's I could."

Buffalo Bill walked a few paces out, where he could see the village.

"What do ye think o' it?" Weasel-top asked anxiously, when he came back.

"I'm ready to try it. We can't gain anything much by concealment, since they have captured Flagg, and saw our camp yesterday afternoon. They must know our numbers, which is something I wish they hadn't discovered. We can't help it now, and must make the most of it."

"What do with Injun?" wailed Lion Tail piteously.

"Consarn ye, we ought ter kill ye!" said Weasel-top. "If my daughter comes to harm that's what I'll do, too!"

"I suppose I can trust you to stay right here and guard him?" the scout asked.

"What ye goin' to do?"

"I thought I'd go after Nick and Little Cayuse. We want to have our force together when we send that ultimatum down to the village. I'll send it by the Piute. Wun Lung can read English. My plan now is to have Little Cayuse galop down there on his pony—but not too close; hold up the buckskin flag which this chief brought; then, when he is seen, and knows he is seen, he can drop the flag on the ground and turn tail at once for the hills, where we will be in waiting. On the buckskin flag we can pin the ultimatum we send to Wun Lung and the occupants of the place. We can say that we will kill the chief, if our friends are killed, and that we will surrender him in exchange for them."

"I allow that mebby it'll work," Old Weasel-top agreed.

He drew one of his big revolvers.

"I'll guard him right hyer. This is as good a place

as any, I reckon; it's open, and I kin see if any one comes. And he can't git away. I'll jest tie his pony to this bush; then what's ter hender me from keepin' him hyar, if I ain't interfered with? I cal'late you won't be gone no great while."

"I'll come right back as soon as I can find Nick and the boy."

"Correct. We've got time enough yit this afternoon ter do suthin', and seems ter me I can't wait."

Mounting Bear Paw, Buffalo Bill turned in the direction taken by Little Cayuse and Nick Nomad, and rode away, leaving Weasel-top in charge of their Indian prisoner.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### THE MESSAGE.

Buffalo Bill had gone no more than half a mile when he heard the heavy report of Weasel-top's revolver, followed almost immediately by two shots more. That brought the scout to a halt.

"What's up?" he said.

He turned Bear Paw about and rode at a lively clip back to the place where he had left Old Weasel-top and the Indian chief.

He found Weasel-top some distance down the mountain slope, declaiming furiously, and now and then shouting like a madman, as he picked his way up the hillside. In his good left hand he swung his big revolver, while with the steel hook on the right he pulled bushes and vines out of his way, and took hold of other bushes and limbs to help his ascent.

When he saw Buffalo Bill he broke out again, and for a little while the scout could not understand a word he said. But it did not take words to declare that Lion Tail had escaped.

"How did it happen?" the scout asked, trying to conceal his vexation, for it seemed that only stupidity could have permitted it.

"Well, I reckon I'm to blame," Weasel-top admitted; "yet I don't see how; I don't see how I could have helped it."

He came scrambling up the slope, hooking his steel "hand" round saplings and limbs, and dragging himself up.

"I don't see how I could help it. You know his pony was tied to that bush over thar, and I reckoned he was safe enough. So I set down by that rock, with my pistol ready, to watch. I was listenin' to you as long as I could hear the hoofs of Bear Paw, and then I was thinkin' about my daughter, and hopin' and prayin' that your plan'd work out all right, and git her out of thar.

"Fust thing I knowed that Injun, tied to the pony's back, gave a queer cluck to his animile, and the pony

bergan ter do stunts ther like of which I never seen. I jumped up ter run ter it, but as I passed it ther critter landed on me with its hind heels and turned me clean over.

"The next thing I knowed it had broke that strap it was tied with, and was goin' down this hyar hill jest like a goat. I never seen anything in the way o' horse-flesh that could take a hill like it did. Ther old thief was on its back, still tied tight enough, but the pony was takin' him off.

"Well, as soon's I could scramble ter my knees, I tried to git the pony with my pistol. I shot at him three times—long's I could see him; and I reckon I missed him clean. I know I was natcherly excited, and my hand was shakin' likely.

"Then ther critter slid away through the cedars down thar, and I started to run after it, bein' by that time well nigh a crazy man. And that's the truth, if ever I told it."

Buffalo Bill rode out on the edge of a near by shelf of rock, which elevated him somewhat and gave him a view of the valley below.

Then he saw the pony nearing the village, bearing the bound chief on its back. Already it had been seen by the people there, for a gate had been opened in the white-washed wall of adobe and a number of men were streaming out. But at that distance he could not tell if they were Chinese or Indians.

In a moment all the plans he had been making to get the prisoners out of the village by offering the chief in exchange for them had fallen to the ground.

Old Weasel-top was explaining and excusing himself again, when a clattering sound of hoofs was heard, and Nomad and Little Cayuse rode into view. When they beheld the scout and Weasel-top they spurred their horses and showed much excitement.

Buffalo Bill saw that Little Cayuse carried something in his hand. When the Indian boy held it up it was seen to be a live bird.

"Er, wauh!" Nomad snorted, drawing rein. "Glad we found ye. What war thet shootin' erbout?" We've got suthin' hyar thet's shore a cur'osity—a devil bird kerryin' a message. Little Cayuse says et's a devil bird, an' I reckin' tis. Anyway, ther kid's skeered of et, an' so'm I."

Little Cayuse slid to the ground, clutching the bird tightly. It was a small hawk, very dark in color, and it fought and snapped in the boy's hands.

"Ther thing come sailin' round nigh us, an' lit in er tree," said Nomad; "an' then we seen thet it had suthin' white tied ter et's leg. I war fer shootin' et, though I didn't like ter make a noise much wi' my hardware, when ther Piute says et he be'lieves he kin knock et outer ther tree wi' a rock, which he does forthwith. When et comes flutterin' down we grabs et, and shore ernough, et has a letter tied ter et's leg."

He began to feel in his war bag for the letter, and drew it out.

"Little Cayuse cain't read et none whatever, an' my early ejication war plum badly neglected in ther days o' my flowery youth, so we brings et ter yer, fer yer to make et out."

The "letter" was written on a thin strip of white papery buckskin, the instrument used being apparently the sharpened end of a leaden cartridge. The letters were large, and there were not many sentences:

"I have discovered that there are white men near this town. I am an American girl, a prisoner, held by Chinese and Indians. I send this out in the hope that the bird may be shot and this received. I appeal to you—rescue me, save me." ETHEL CALTON."

Old Weasel-top snatched the piece of buckskin out of the scout's hands.

"From my daughter!" he shouted. "Halleluyer! She's alive!"

His face was flushed; his blue eyes shining and fiery.

"But she's a prisoner!" he added. "She's got pluck, though—that girl has! And sharp—she's as sharp as a tack. Wouldn't one girl in a thousand thought of openin' communication with us in that way. Seems almost as if she knowed I was out hyar; but, of course, she didn't. Ther next question is, how're we goin' ter git her? We're goin' to, but how?"

"This is a surprising thing," said the scout, looking at the bird which the Piute boy held gingerly, for it was still trying to tear him with its beak and claws.

"Um devil bird!" said the Piute gravely.

A "devil bird" meant a bird of ill omen, though there was, in the Indian mind, a question whether it was a bird at all, as it might be an evil spirit masquerading as a bird. Little Cayuse visibly trembled, even while he clung to the creature, for if it were a devil bird, then he was in sore danger. A peck of its beak or rake of its claws might bring fatal results. But he was trying to be brave and "follow the white man's road," since he had come under the influence of the great Pa-has-ka. White men did not believe in devil birds, though Nick Nomad was possibly an exception.

"What d'yer jedge et ter be?" Nomad asked the scout.

"Some kind of hawk."

"Et looks et; yit I never see one jest that color, an' as fer fightin' an' clawin', it do beat all. See whar et ripped my coat! Little Cayuse's dornick clapped ther critter on ther neck, and over et went, floppin' down outer ther tree, and 'fore et comes ter itself ag'in we air gruppin' et. An' then we sees that et shore kerries a message."

"A message which shows that we have some hard work cut out for us, for, of course, we'll never leave this village until we get that girl."

"Halleluyer!" yelled Old Weasel-top, tears in his

eyes. "An' after we git her, then I want to git that Chink! I ain't goin' to be through hyar until me and Wun Lung meets up together and has it out with knives er pistols; *that* is shore a heathen Chinese that I'm goin' to finish, if I live long enough."

Little Cayuse subdued the hawk by gripping it round the neck and choking it, after which he looped cords over its wings and round its legs. Even when it was helpless it would lie on its back and "hiss" at whoever came near, and make desperate efforts to strike with beak and claws.

"We can't know how the daughter of our friend came to get hold of this bird," remarked the scout, "unless it was kept there in the village as a pet."

"A pet!" whooped Nomad. "Ye might as well try ter pet a spider. A rattlesnake would be plenty less venomous."

"If it wasn't kept as a pet, then Miss Calton by some chance managed to capture it there in the village, and then loosed it, with the message tied to its leg."

"She war takin' long chances. 'Twar jes' cold luck that me and Little Cayuse war over thar whar it come."

"No doubt she knew she was taking long chances. Sometimes that kind will win, as in this case. What I'm wondering is, whether we could send word back to her in the same way?"

"By ther hawk?"

"Yes."

"Whoop! Halleluyer!" cried Old Weasel-top. "That's it. We'll try to send the bird back."

"If it was a pet of some one there," said the scout, "it would probably return after a while, and it might be that the girl would get it again. It would be worth trying, at any rate."

"Yes; we must try it!" declared Weasel-top.

The scout took the buckskin, erased the girl's message with his pencil rubber, then penciled the words:

"O. K. Understood. Be ready to help."

He signed it "Eben Calton," which was the name of Old Weasel-top.

"It won't do to say too much," he explained, "for we don't know whose hands this may get into, if the bird takes it to the village. Miss Calton may have sent her message out so secretly that no one knew of it. It is my opinion that she did. So we don't want to inform any one there of what she has done. We can only hope that the bird will take the message, and that she will get it. If she does, she will understand it. That name will tell her that her father is out here, and I think nothing could cheer her up more than that."

While the bird was still tied the scout fastened this message to its leg, then threw off the cords.

For a second or two the bird lay on the ground, not aware that it was free, but ready for a fight. When it

discovered that its wings were no longer tied, it gave a quick flutter, then flashed into the air, giving a scream as it did so.

After flying a short distance it alighted in a tree, where it proceeded to pick at the buckskin bound about its leg.

"Him no like um," said Little Cayuse.

When it could not release the buckskin, the bird rose out of the tree, and circled in apparently aimless flight above the hills. But soon it started off in the direction of the village.

Old Weasel-top whooped his delight.

"Go!" he cried, waving his arms dramatically, the steel hook on his right arm cutting eccentric circles.

"Et's a plum caryer pigeon," said Nomad, "one er them birds couldn't hike out straighter er better. I allow we worried et so that et wants ter git back home quick's et kin. Waal, I don't blame et; I'm jest hopin' that Calton's gal will be whar she kin git her purty hands on that writin' 'fore any one else does. Wun Lung kin read English, maybe, and p'raps that's others that what kin."

That was the reason Buffalo Bill had been so careful in his wording of the message.

The small dark hawk became lost to sight over the village, but they felt reasonably sure it had returned to that place.

"Et's plain that ef Lem Flagg is helt thar as a pris'ner," said Nomad, "that the gal don't know nuthin' erbout et. At least she didn't when she sent that out. 'Twould be sing'lar ef he warn't taken inter ther village at all!"

Old Weasel-top, no longer able to see the hawk, began to talk again, questioning as to how they were to reach his daughter in the midst of their enemies, behind those walls of adobe.

It presented a problem which promised to be hard to solve.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### FLAGG AND THE GIRL.

Lem Flagg was calling himself all of the fifty-seven varieties of fools as he sat cross-legged on the earthen floor of one of the whitewashed houses of the queer village, and looked out at the ill-assorted mob that had come to stare at him as if he were some queer animal.

"Clear out, you rat-eaters and tom-fool redskins! Didn't ye ever see a white man before?" he said to them. "But I reckon there ain't one of you that's half as big a fool as I am."

The redskins scowled blackly at him, the Chinese chattered and grinned like hideous manikins, but they did not try to approach too close to the white man, even

though they must have known that he had only his fists for weapons. His revolvers and knife had been taken away, but he had not been tied when cast into this mud house. He judged that was because there seemed no earthly chance of his escape. Beyond the houses was the high adobe wall, which no one but the most expert athlete could hope to scale; and to reach it from the house one would be forced to pass through this mob of Indians and Chinamen.

Lem Flagg had tried to size up the situation and figure out just how serious was the fix in which he found himself, and it was discouraging.

"The worst of it is, that it's all my own fault!" he growled. "If I'd used jest good common horse sense I wouldn't 'a' been here, but with Cody's crowd; but I thought I knew what I was doin', and that the thing was safe."

He had left the camp that he had been set to guard, having heard a noise down by the spring which had excited his curiosity. He had thought to look into its meaning, and get back without rousing any one in the camp, regarding it as his duty to make such an investigation. He did not feel that he ought to awaken any one, for all needed sleep, and he saw no need of it.

When he got to the spring he found that Indians and Chinese had come down to it in the hope of surprising the scout's party, which they believed had gone into camp there.

That the whites were not there had so astonished them that they were dazed at first, but now they had scouts digging round in the scrub trying to pick up the trail of the white men and find out where they had gone.

All this was not perfectly clear to Lem Flagg until he had crept close to the chattering mob that had sought to rush the camp.

In doing that he got too close in, and in turning to back away he stumbled and tripped. In another minute he was fighting, as he believed, for his life.

He was rapped on the head and captured, and brought to the village. For all of which reasons he was now throwing malodorous epithets at himself.

"I'll die of shame, if I ever have to tell that to Cody," he thought. "What kind of a cheap John am I, anyhow, to be left in charge of a camp, and then play I'm a fool, in that way! I'm the limit, and whatever is comin' my way now I reckon I've earned it."

He began again to shout at the Chinese and Indians, ordering them to stand back and give him room.

"I don't like to be crowded so clost by Chinks and reds," he declared, "so I'd thank ye to stand back and give me breathin' room a-plenty. You'll put the kibosh on me, I reckon, when the time comes, but I don't want to be killed by breathin' bad air before it does come."

He had already seen that the house into which he had been flung was different in some respects from the

others in the village. It was a white cube, as they were, but over it was a dome. Close by it was another that had a dome and pagoda effect, and held a chime of bells, which he had heard ring out musically.

"That thing over yon is a joss house, I take it," he said to them; "but in the name o' heaven, tell me what this is? If it's a jail, it don't look it; yet I reckon it's a jail, or I wouldn't be held here. But I'm gittin' tired of these quarters. There ain't no cushioned chairs in here, ner any mahogany writin' desk, an' no books, er nuthin'! How's an American goin' to stand this kind of an imprisonment, I'd like to know!"

He didn't suppose that any one understood a word, but somehow it relieved his feelings to shout out at them, and because they were supposed not to understand he was the more reckless in what he said.

"This thing of Chinks and Indians herdin' together is the limit, anyhow," he declared. "Yet which is the low-downest, Chink or Indian, would puzzle a scientist to tell. I pass it up."

They chattered back at him, but he didn't know what they said.

"Where is Wun Lung?" he demanded. "He's the high-muck-a-muck that I'd like to see. I'd like to tell him what I think of him."

There was a buzz at the farther side of the crowd, and the people there began to fall away, showing that some one of consequence was coming.

"Ah! I reckon the whelp is approachin' now!" cried Flagg. "Well, jest tell him fer me, will ye, as he toddles along there, that he can't work no jimcrow bizness with me, with a mirror and a brass ball, like what he did to Old Weasel-top. If he tries it, I'll knock his head off."

His amazement was great, as the lane opened in the crowd, when he saw that the one approaching was not Wun Lung, but a handsome young woman. He stared at her, with mouth dropping open, as she came into view.

That she was an American he did not doubt for an instant; yet her clothing was decidedly Indian in its make and material, with certain ornamental touches that suggested the Chinese. Her dress, or tunic, was of white buckskin; and her little hat was Indian-like in its show of dyed feathers; she wore Indian moccasins, too; but the fan she carried was certainly a Chinese article.

"Old Weasel-top's daughter, or I'm a he goat!" was the thought of the young American. "Well, she's purty as a picture; and she seems to be as free here as the air that blows; and that's a funny thing, too, when you come to think of it! She looks sure enough like a queen."

The Chinese and Indians stood back and gave her room to pass; and she came on up to the door of the whitewashed cube of a house in which now stood the young man who had eyed her advance so curiously.

There was a hot flush on her cheeks and an eager light in her eyes.

"You're an American, and a prisoner here," she said. He leaped to his feet, and stood back of the doorway, his hat in his hand.

"That seems to be the size of it," he admitted. "I was a fool to let myself get caught, but here I am."

"I didn't know anything about it until a little while ago; then I was told that you had been brought in last night. I've done an unwise thing in coming to you, I suppose; but I felt that I must."

"Well, it sure surprises me," he said; "and yet maybe it oughtn't; fer we were expectin' to find a young lady here. You're her, I guess—Calton's daughter!"

She uttered a little cry at that and her face became very pale.

"Eben Calton?" she said, her voice shaking.

"The same. He's with Buffalo Bill's crowd out there. It's a long story, which I hope to have the pleasure of telling you at some time. But if you're Miss Ethel Calton, I can tell you that your father is outside, on the hills there somewhere, and they're hopin' to jump in here and give you help; they didn't know sure you were in here, but thought so. I'd have been out there with 'em now, but for a fool break I made last night, which put me here. I'll tell you about that, too, when I get a chance. Just now, all I can say is that your father will be the happiest man in the world to know that you're alive and well; and that Cody will get in here and help you, if there's a man on top of ground that can. But for the knowledge that he's out there I reckon my own hopes would have gone glimmering long ago. This is an odd bunch here."

He nodded toward the Indians and Celestials, who were again crowding about the entrance.

For a minute the girl trembled so that she seemed unable to say anything.

"It seems queer to see you going round free, this way," he suggested, trying to help her out.

"Not so queer, when you understand it," she declared; "but I can't think of anything but father. Poor father!"

"Well, he's all right now, you know. He was a little off, so far as his head was concerned, at first; but he's all right now."

She seemed to understand the reference.

"I hope he'll get that message," she said.

"I guess I don't know about that."

Lem Flagg was choosing his words, as he had not done recently; and though he lapsed now and then, he showed that he could use good English with precision when he tried.

"There is a young chief here named Black Hawk," she said, flushing slightly at the mention of his name. "He kept a small black, or dark, hawk in a cage; it was his mascot, or totem sign, or something of the kind. Well, I learned from some of the talk I overheard last night

that white men were out on the hills somewhere; so this morning early I slipped to that cage, and released the hawk, after I had tied some writing to its leg. It flew off toward the hills, and I've been hoping those white men would see it—see the white buckskin on its leg—and shoot it, and so get the message. It was probably a wild idea; and when the chief knows his hawk is gone he will be furious. I shouldn't want him to know that I did it, as he has been about the best friend I have had here."

"That's interesting," said Flagg. "I wish I had a chair to offer you; but you see that the furniture is absent; been taken out to the pawnbroker's, likely."

He smiled. Somehow the presence of this young woman gave him a hopeful feeling he had tried in vain to secure before; her coming was like a rift of sunshine breaking through a black cloud. It was hard for him to believe that she was the daughter of the man he knew as Old Weasel-top.

She wanted to talk about her father; and he gave her all the information he possessed, even telling her of his steel arm, of his lapse of memory, and his queer experience with Wun Lung.

She shuddered when he told of the Chinese smuggler.

"I'm deathly afraid of him," she confessed. "I suppose I shall have to tell you about it."

"I want to hear it, of course; but it seems too bad to have you standing."

She looked back at the Chinese and Indian faces converging about the door. Many of them were scowling; all were unfriendly.

"Whether I stand or sit is unimportant," she said, in a low voice; "the important thing is to get out of this place. As you have met and talked with my father, you no doubt know how we were attacked by Indians and Chinese in the desert. I was carried off to this place, and I feared that father had been killed. It has been a long time ago—a year or more, I think; I can't keep track of time here. Wun Lung, the Chinaman, was at the head of the force attacking us, and I think it was done simply to get me into his power. He and his Chinamen have been living here for four or five years, perhaps longer, with these Indians; and they have gradually got the upper hand, so that most of the Indians are afraid of them. The Indians are dreadfully frightened by what goes on in that Chinese pagoda, where the joss is; the incense and the lights, and the queer howling of the Chinese, frighten the Indians.

"Wun Lung supposed, I think, that he could do as he pleased with me, when he brought me here; and though he had two Indian wives, he intended to force me to become his wife. But it happened that one of his Indian wives is a sister of the young chief I mentioned, Black Hawk; and that Black Hawk, though he already has a wife, took a fancy to me. The whole thing nearly

frightened me to death, when I understood it; but in the end it has worked for my interest.

"For, you see, Black Hawk has a good deal of influence with the warriors; and when he declared, inasmuch as Wun Lung was married to two Indian women, one being his sister, that he wanted me himself for a wife that stopped Wun Lung from carrying out his plan. Then Black Hawk's wife rebelled, saying she would kill me if the chief married me; so I haven't been forced to marry any one yet."

Her face had flushed again and the telling of this embarrassed her.

"It has been through the favor of Black Hawk that I have been given a lodge by myself, and the young squaws have made clothing for me, and even acted as my servants. But of course I know it can't last. I shall have to marry either the young chief or the Chinaman; or perhaps a war will break out about it, and I shall go to whoever wins."

She put her hand to the bosom of her buckskin jacket and drew out a small revolver.

"But I have decided what I shall do when the worst comes; I shall simply shoot myself with this, and end it. Black Hawk gave me this to defend myself against Wun Lung if the Chinaman became too troublesome; but Black Hawk never dreamed that I would think of using it against myself."

The way she said it almost made Lem Flagg shudder.

"You're a plucky woman," was all he could say at the moment.

"Merely a desperate one! Really, I'm a coward; what terror I have suffered here no tongue could ever tell. You see, though I am free to go about, I can't escape; and as it is known that I can't, I am permitted to go wherever I want to, in the village. The gates are always locked and guarded; and the walls are too high to climb. The villagers know, too, that even if I could get out, I should not be able to get through the mountains and the desert; and that they could overtake me without trouble."

She put back the little revolver; and had been careful, when she exhibited it, to so hold it that the staring eyes beyond the door should not see it.

"But when I heard from the talk—I've learned to understand the Indians better than the Chinese—that white men, enemies of these people, were on the hills, I wondered if they would not try to rescue me, if they knew I was held here. It was then that I thought of the little hawk and sent him out. And it was only a little while ago that I discovered they had captured one of the white men and brought him in here."

She spoke hurriedly, in a voice that trembled, glancing now and then at the faces beyond the door.

"I'm banking on Cody doing something," said Flagg. "That scout is a wonder."

"Yes, I know," she answered. "He helped us when we were with the Pimas, and I'm well acquainted with him. But he is the last man I expected to hear of in this wild region."

"That it is a wild region, with dangers a-plenty, is the best reason in the world why he should be looked for here," Flagg declared.

"Yes, that is so, I don't doubt."

"So, I'm going to believe he will get in here and help us."

She shook her head doubtfully.

"I'm sorry to say it, but I don't see how he can; the gates are locked and watched, and the walls are watched. The people here are well armed, and could shoot him and his friends down. It makes me worried about father, to think of it."

Flagg was thinking that if the scout and his pards did not get in his own outlook was black enough; but he would not say it to her, and discourage her.

"I stand ready to do anything I can," he asserted; "just show me what there is that I can do."

She shook her head again.

"There isn't anything."

"They'll just hold me here?"

She gave him a wavering glance.

"They may kill you," she said in a low voice; "but I'll give you this revolver, to defend yourself with, if you think you'd like it. My own life is safe enough, for the present."

But he refused it; and began to try to lay plans for escaping out of the town, and taking her with him; yet they seemed futile, hopeless plans.

While they still talked, cries broke forth from the Chinks and Indians before the door, and the crowd drew back, melting away, many of the members of it beginning to run toward one of the gates.

The girl stepped to the door and looked out; then her exclamation of wonder drew Lem Flagg to look out, also.

Coming down a hill close by the eastern wall was a pony bearing an Indian who bent forward on the animal's neck in a manner so rigid as to suggest that he was tied there.

"What does it mean?" she asked of a warrior near.

He did not understand her, or would not enlighten her.

But soon she heard the cry:

"Lion Tail!"

It was not in English, but in the Pacheco equivalent, which she had learned.

"It is one of the chiefs," she said in much excitement; "he seems to be tied to his horse, and the Indians are running to the gate to open it for him."

"Some of Cody's work, I'm betting," declared Lem Flagg. "Maybe the rascal is bringing a message and

they sent him in that way to show that they mean business out there."

The girl was shaking like a leaf.

"I'll try to find out what it means," she promised, and stepped from the doorway, mingling with some of the chattering squaws, who had remained near the house after the departure of the warriors. One of them was that Indian wife of Wun Lung who was Black Hawk's sister; and the girl spoke to her, asking for information. The woman did not know, and set forth to learn.

The girl did not go down to the gate; and she did not know certainly what had happened for nearly half an hour, when Black Hawk's sister came back and told her. As phrased by the Indian woman, it was a startling story.

Lion Tail had reported that the white men in the hills had come on him suddenly, captured him, and then had bound him to the back of the pony; but that he had succeeded in getting away. He was very much enraged, and his story had frightened the women.

Black Hawk's sister went away after telling this; and there was a great hubbub of excitement in the village.

"Is Wun Lung in this town now?" asked Flagg.

"I think he is; though I could wish him anywhere else in the world," said the girl. "I am so afraid of that horrible Chinaman that I almost faint whenever he comes near me."

"I reckon he has a lot of influence here; the Chinks will do anything he says, I suppose; though it's queer to me. Chinks and Indians harnessed up together this way is a new one on me."

"Yet it isn't so strange, when you understand it."

"I suppose that's right—when you understand it!"

"These Chinamen are, I think, all fugitives, who don't dare stay in the United States or in any cities of Mexico; they are criminals; and they can't go back to China, because they would be arrested on the ships if they tried it. That's my idea, anyhow. They first came into a valley south of here; and in that valley is still where they do their farming and gardening; they're the farmers, while the Indians do the hunting and fishing. It doesn't make so bad a partnership. There was war at first between the Chinamen and the Indians; but it was fixed up some way, and then the Chinamen came and lived here in the village."

"I'm betting Wun Lung patched up that peculiar friendship."

"I think there's no doubt of it. So the Indians and the Chinese are living together now, as you see them; but I think the Chinese are growing stronger, in influence, and the Indians weaker; for, you see, the Chinese are much the smarter, and know how to work the Indians. Wun Lung is a sort of fugitive himself, I think; and he makes this his home. It's away back here behind the desert and the mountains; and I suppose he thought no safer place could be found in the world."

"An ideal arrangement—for the outlawed Chinks."

"Nothing could be finer, from their standpoint."

"They don't ever leave?"

"Wun Lung does, and some of the others; you said Wun Lung appeared now and then in San Francisco, and is at the head of a gang of smugglers."

"That's right; he's the boss Chinese smuggler of the American-Mexican border, and they say he has made a mint of money. But he won't need to make any more; he can pike out for the Flowery Kingdom and be richer than a mandarin, if he hangs to the treasure he lifted from that cache."

He elaborated what he had already told her about the cache of gold, and her father's interest in it, as well as his own.

She agreed with him that Wun Lung probably meant to accumulate all the money he could, and then return to China.

"But I don't think he meant to do that soon," she said. "His ideas of riches have probably grown very large since he became acquainted with San Francisco."

"Do you think," Flagg asked, "that he would bring that treasure into this town? Seems to me he'd hesitate about that; for he might have to divvy with the Chinese here, and perhaps the Indians would also expect a whack at it. The secret of the cache was told to your father by an Indian, you know."

"I've been thinking about that. The Indian he spoke of must have been a chief who disappeared in the hills and was never seen here again; I heard some of the women talking about it, and it was a mystery to them."

She stood again in the door, gazing out into the village.

Suddenly she uttered a little cry.

Flagg saw that she was looking at the sky, and glanced in the same direction.

A bird was circling down as if it meant to alight, and he saw plainly that something white was tied round one of its legs.

"The hawk!" she said. "He has come back; and they didn't get the message, after all!"

"Too bad!" said Flagg.

The little hawk dropped to a roof, almost unnoticed by the excited Indians; and the girl started from the door.

"I must get that buckskin off its leg before any one sees it," she declared. "Some of the Chinamen might be able to read what I wrote on it, and I don't want them to."

She hurried out, and Flagg saw her go to the house and climb by a ladder to the flat roof where the bird rested. He saw it flutter away from her; saw her follow it across the roof, and then capture it.

"Hurrah for you!" Flagg muttered, his eyes following her with admiration. "You're plucky."

Then he saw her, as she descended with the bird from the roof, encounter an Indian, a young fellow with bright feathers in his hair, to whom, after some words, she surrendered the hawk.

When she came back hurriedly to the house where Flagg was held a prisoner—a number of Indians being still before its door—he observed that her face was red and her blue eyes very bright; and that she was agitated.

But the Indians stood aside and let her go on in.

As soon as inside she snatched the buckskin from her jacket, where she had hidden it.

"The Indian I gave the bird to was Black Hawk. But hear this!" she whispered.

Then she read the message which Buffalo Bill had penciled on the buckskin.

Lem Flagg had hard work to repress his strong desire to yell.

"Bully!" he said. "Word from your father. Buffalo Bill forever! Cody is a wonder! He'll get in here if mortal man can do it."

Taking the buckskin strip he read what the scout had written.

"Hide it," she urged; "I don't want it to be found on me; you can scrape a hole in the earth here, and hide it when no one is looking; but not now."

Some of the Indians had come to the door and were gazing in.

"Don't let them dream, from your actions, that we have good news, or any kind of news," she warned.

He slipped the buckskin into a pocket.

"All right," he promised. "It says be ready, and we'll try to be. But I wish Cody had set down a few more words, and told us what it is they mean to do."

"Perhaps they didn't know," she suggested; "and, even if they did, they couldn't afford to run the risk of doing that, as the message might have fallen into the hands of some Chinaman who could read it."

"You're right," he declared, "and I'm an idiot. But this has feasted me so that I am fair dizzy."

He heard a sound and looked out.

"Hello!" he said. "Who's coming now?"

She stepped back, where she could get a view.

"It's Wun Lung," she whispered, her voice shaking again; "and that chief is with him that the horse brought in; I heard his name then, and it is Lion Tail."

She seemed scared.

"I must be going, for Wun Lung frightens me; I suppose he has come with the chief to have a talk with you. Give me back the message on the buckskin; they might search you, and find it."

When he gave it to her she thrust it again into the bosom of her jacket; then flitted out of the house, and was gone.

Lem Flagg saw that a lane had opened in the crowd

before his door, and through it approached Wun Lung and an Indian chief.

"Well, this is interesting," he muttered; "but I wonder what the rascals want?"

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE DARING OF LEM FLAGG.

Wun Lung and Lion Tail came on into the prison, closing the door behind them. That shut out a good deal of light, but a near by window, high in the wall, a deep and narrow slit, let in enough, so that Lem Flagg saw clearly the men before him. Wun Lung was a typical Chinaman, in Chinese clothing, Lion Tail a typical Indian; so that the three men in that room were as strangely contrasted as can be imagined.

Wun Lung sat down cross-legged on the floor, with a bland wave of his hand motioning the chief to do the same, an order that was obeyed. Lem Flagg stood out in the light, motionless, attentive.

"Plenty nice Melican man him have seat," invited Wun Lung with Oriental suavity, and again he waved his hand.

"I suppose I might as well," said Flagg, and sat down against the opposite wall, where he could see the door as well as his visitors.

"What nice Melican man do here?" asked the Chinaman blandly.

"Seein' that I'm held in this prison hole, I don't see why you ask?" growled Flagg.

"Why Melican man come, me mean?"

"Why did I come? I shouldn't think you'd need to ask that, either."

"Melican man say why um come?"

Wun Lung unrolled an object he took out of his blouse, and Flagg saw that it was the mirror with the metal ball that had bewitched Old Weasel-top.

"Why um come?" said Wun Lung, twisting the "key" and setting the ball in motion.

Flagg stared at the ball, until he remembered that in that manner Old Weasel-top had had his head turned, when he looked away.

"I suppose," he answered, "I might as well be frank, as you must know about it already. Our crowd followed you because Buffalo Bill had a warrant for your arrest, and because we thought you had lifted the cache of gold, and likewise because Eben Calton's daughter is held here a prisoner. You see, I'm giving it to you straight."

The metal ball was spinning, and Flagg had hard work to keep from looking at it.

"For Chinaman play with," explained Wun Lung; "you likee see um?"

Flagg looked at the Indian, refusing to look at the ball.

The crafty Celestial merely smiled, and went on talking. Apparently he had a lively curiosity, as he inquired about everything he could think of that was even remotely connected with the party of white men. Flagg wondered at this, until suddenly he perceived that what Wun Lung was doing was to keep up a droning talk that had no great interest for anybody, expecting that the white man, by looking at the spinning ball, would soon come under his influence.

Even as that flashed on him, Flagg found that he was growing sleepy and confused, and knew that without intending it he had more or less given casual glances at the ball. The discovery shocked him into full wakefulness.

"He wants to get me under his influence and perhaps send me out into the hills with some lying message as to the real condition of things in here, hoping that will send the white men piking along the back track. Well, I'll not fall under his infernal influence; I'll keep my head straight on my shoulders, and my eyes open and wide awake. Lem Flagg, ain't you got as good a head as this yellow-faced rat-eater? You ought to have! Then don't let him dope you!"

The new grip he took of himself enabled him to banish the queer feelings that had been stealing over him; and he kept wide awake and alert, from that moment on.

Wun Lung discovered this in a little while, and it angered him.

"I suppose you didn't bring the gold from that cache in here?" Flagg shot at him suddenly.

The effect was what Flagg desired. The Chinaman was stared at in a questioning manner by the Indian chief.

"What gold?" said Lion Tail.

"Why, don't you know about that?" Flagg went on desperately. "Wun Lung lifted a cache of gold—a cart-load of the stuff—and piked toward this village with it; and—"

Wun Lung gave a roar of rage and flung the whirling object at the white man's head; but Flagg ducked, and the thing smashed against the wall, with a sound of shattering glass. The next instant the Chinaman had whipped out a long knife and dived with it at the American, his face wrinkled with rage, his yellow lips frothing. He had lost all control of himself in his sudden blaze of anger.

The long knife would have stabbed Lem Flagg through the body had not the Indian chief pushed out his quilled and beaded moccasin and tripped the Chinaman. The knife fell to the floor; for Wun Lung, to save himself from butting into the wall, had to throw out his hands.

The Indian chief came to his feet with a guttural grunt and flashed out his tomahawk.

This gave Lem Flagg a chance to spring up and back

into a corner; and, having by a swoop of his arm secured the long knife, he lifted it, and stood on the defensive.

Wun Lung pulled himself together, still wild with rage; and for a moment or so it seemed that the little room was about to witness a lively three-cornered fight. But Wun Lung regained in a measure his self-control. Then he began to chatter at the chief, using words which Flagg did not understand.

The chief turned angrily, stalked to the door, flung it open, and went plunging into the midst of the crowd that hung around outside. Wun Lung and the American were left facing each other.

"If you come at me, you rat-eater, I'll put this into you to the hilt!" Flagg threatened.

But Wun Lung had no notion now of flinging himself on the American.

"We talkee li'l' bit," he said. "Him gone, we talkee heap plenty—savvy?"

"That's all right—but no tricks! I'll hear what you've got to say; but I've got this knife now and I'll use it; so just keep your distance."

"Velly nice Melican man talkee Chinaman," said Wun Lung, trying to coax a smile to his yellow face; "we talkee about Melican man gittee out of this. How Melican man like?"

"I'd like to get out all right, you bet."

"Good! We talkee about that."

He was standing between Flagg and the door.

"What Melican man know about gold cache?" he demanded.

"Well, my crowd knows that you lifted what gold there was in that cache near the Twin Buttes, and piked out with it, riding one horse and leading three others. We picked up your trail and followed it. You didn't bring the gold into this village, I know now; and I shall tell Lion Tail, and Black Hawk, and all the other chiefs, all I know about it; they'll want their share, and your Chink pards will want theirs."

"What um know about Black Hawk?" said the Chinaman, amazed that the prisoner had ever heard of that chief.

"I know enough. You and he haven't been friends here; I know that, too; and—"

"Melican girl tell!" said the Chinaman, making a shrewd guess.

"Stand back, you rat-eater? I've got the knife!" He waved it. "Now, I'm ready to strike a bargain with you. I think we can come to an understanding. Buffalo Bill is out there in the hills, and he has come for you; and when he goes after a man, generally that man is his meat. You lifted the gold from that cache, and have got it somewhere. You want to go back to China, and be a rich man. Now, I'll do this. Let me and the girl go out and join that party in the hills, and I'll promise to do everything that I can to get them to turn

round and not trouble you any more. Then, when you get ready, you can take your gold and hit the trail for the Flowery Kingdom. How does that strike you?"

A wicked look flashed into the eyes of the Celestial and he whipped a revolver out of his blouse.

At that moment, with Lem Flagg desperate, it was the worst thing the Chinaman could have done.

With a bellow Flagg flung himself on him and twisted the revolver out of his hand, bowling the Chink to the floor. Before Wun Lung fairly knew what had happened, the white man had him covered with the revolver and had backed toward the door.

"Send up a yell, you Chinese toad, and I'll snuff your light out," said Flagg, in a way that showed he meant it.

He now had Wun Lung's knife and revolver, and the Chinaman was at his mercy. The Chink showed his knowledge of it by throwing up his hands.

"Nice Melican man no shoot," he wheezed.

"Oh, won't I? Don't try me, if you think I won't. Nothing would please me better than to snuff out a rat-eater of your variety, and I'll do it before you can sneeze twice, if you make a holler."

"Nice Melican man no shoot Chinaman; me him flend."

"So's a rattlesnake!" snorted Flagg. "Now, I'm going to git out o' this, and you've got to help me—see? There's a lot of Chinks and Indians outside, but they're all your friends; so I'm goin' to ask you to pilot me right through that push. You want to do it in a way to make them think it rejoices you—see? I'm goin' to walk right along by your side, and you're goin' to smile over it, as if you had jest received a Christmas gift, or found a bunch of red firecrackers—see?"

Wun Lung lay back, cowering, almost afraid to speak.

"Git up!" commanded the young American.

Wun Lung climbed heavily to his feet.

"Stop shakin' like a chills-and-fever clay-eater and put a smile on your face! Is this door locked?"

"No locked," said Wun Lung.

"That's good. Now step up here and be ready to play your part in this refined melodrama; I'm goin' out of this, and you're goin' along as my willing escort."

He stepped to the side of the Chink; then with the revolver under his coat, held in his right hand, punching it against the side of the Celestial, he commanded Wun Lung to step forward and open the door.

"Down goes your dog house if you play tricks; if you so much as bat an eye crooked, I'll shoot you dead in your tracks, and take the consequences. I'm goin' to git out of this town, and you're goin' to show me how."

Never had Wun Lung met a "foreign devil" who was so desperate or who apparently held his life so lightly. The touch of that revolver reduced the Chinaman to the condition of a jellyfish; but at the same time it forced him on; so, walking beside the white man, he stepped to the door.

His hands lacked strength at first, and he could not get the door open; then it yielded to the tug he gave it; and the white man and the Chinaman appeared together before the astonished crowd outside.

"Straight ahead!" said Flagg in a low tone.

His right hand was thrust into the bosom of his coat, where it held the handle of the hidden revolver and gave quick jabs of the muzzle against the side of the Chinaman.

Though questions of astonishment were hurled at Wun Lung, he seemed to have gone stone deaf, for he did not answer them, but walked straight ahead, the white man stepping along with him. The mob opened a lane for them, standing back, gaping and questioning.

"Down to that gate at the corner of the wall," said Lem Flagg, wondering how he was to get out there even if permitted to reach it. He knew he had never taken such desperate chances; yet he did not see how, in any event, he could make his condition much worse than it had been, unless the enraged villagers killed him.

Wun Lung's face oozed perspiration; and he stumbled at times, but kept on toward the gate, the Chinese and Indians streaming alongside, and behind the pair.

A murmur began to run through the mob of Chinks and Indians, as the suggestion was set going that the white man had got control of the Chinaman's wonderful mirror and spinning ball and had used them to the undoing of the Chinaman himself. Knowing all about the ball and mirror, and how through their power Wun Lung subdued men to his wishes, the thing seemed not improbable; for they saw that Wun Lung was not at all himself; he seemed like a dead man walking.

Though Lem Flagg did not understand the words he heard he knew that his danger was increasing. He even marveled at his own nerve and daring, which had made him undertake a thing so desperate. But now that he was on his way to the gate, and was making the trial, he resolved to go right ahead, and trust to luck and bluff to carry him through.

From all directions he saw Indians and Chinese running, joining themselves to the crowd that streamed alongside and behind. The cries grew angrier, and some of the Chinks and Indians began to come in closer. The gate was still a good twenty yards away.

"Keep your nerve now," Flagg whispered to himself; "don't let them stampede ye; if you run now there will be a dozen knives in your back before you know it; steady, boy—steady!"

Wun Lung's knees seemed collapsing under him. The American took him by the arm, to help him along; whereupon there was a roar from the Chinamen who saw it. Some of them rushed in, shouting angrily, but fell back, still lacking courage to attack the white man; besides, they were puzzled, though it seemed it could not be the wish of Wun Lung to go on in that way.

The gate was but ten yards off, and Wun Lung was stumbling heavily.

"I'll make him order the guards to let me out," was the thought of Lem Flagg. "Cricky, I believe it's going to work! Now, if that girl was here with me! I ought to have planned it somehow so that she could have been. I see there is where I fell down."

He was within two yards of the gate, with the Chinese and Indians becoming angrier each moment, when Wun Lung fell heavily, dropping unconscious in the path. The fright and the ordeal had been too much for the Celestial, who had collapsed completely.

A mighty roar went up as the Chinaman dropped and the young American sprang for the gate.

Over the gate was a little watch tower, containing two men, who were armed with old muskets; both were Chinamen. The gate itself was locked. Seeing Wun Lung fall, and thinking the American responsible, these guards fired on Flagg. But their bullets missed. Gaining the gate, and unable to get through it, he set his back against it and drew his revolver, whipping it out and flashing it in the faces of the men who rushed on him.

A flying missile struck Flagg on the head at this juncture, and he went down, falling by the gate. A dozen Chinamen were on top of him the next moment.

A half an hour later he came back to consciousness in the same prison from which he had made so brave an effort to escape. His head was bruised and bloody, his clothing was torn and ripped, and his body had been raked with knives; that he was alive and not dangerously wounded was a remarkable thing, when one considers the mauling through which he had gone and the fact that he had been dragged by the heels along the path back to the prison.

For a little while after coming to himself the young American's head whirled so dizzily that he hardly knew where he was and what had befallen him.

Then he remembered.

"So, you failed!" he said, then. "Well, it was a great effort, and worth it."

## CHAPTER X.

### TWO IMPORTANT CAPTURES.

Although Lem Flagg's daring effort to escape seemed to have been futile, its results were far-reaching.

The first to be moved to action by it was Wun Lung himself, who had collapsed so miserably at the gate through excess of terror; a collapse from which he was even longer in recovering than Flagg was from his state of unconsciousness.

When the Celestial came back to himself and a clear

recollection of what had occurred, he was in his own house, one of the best in the village, and his favorite Indian wife was fussing round, trying to wait on him.

Wun Lung sent her out of the room with a sharp command; then lay back on his cot, trying to think. The pillow was of silk, brought from San Francisco, and the coverings of the cot were the same. On a lacquered table was a light—a wick of fibre burning in a bowl of fat; beside it a smoldering joss stick sent out its perfume. Wun Lung's Indian wife had never been able to understand the reason of that joss stick; yet she knew Wun Lung liked it there, for which cause she had lighted it.

The Chinaman took a survey of his position in that village, and in the country. He knew he was a fugitive, with a price on his head, and that his safety could only be secured by perpetual watching and care; even in this remote spot the arm of the law might reach him in time. He had long thought of returning to China, if it could be done safely; and now he thought of it again.

He was very much troubled. At a certain point in the hills he had established a secret storehouse, where for many months he had been hiding gold and treasure, the treasure consisting chiefly of diamonds, for which he had traded gold in San Francisco. For American paper money he had little liking. And diamonds were easier to carry than gold.

The daring American's talk in the prison had aroused the suspicion and cupidity of Lion Tail. There could be no doubt of it. What the American had said would be retailed in the village by that chief; and it would spread from the Indians to the Chinese. Soon Wun Lung would be watched and spied on, not only by the Indians, but by his own people, any one of whom would murder him, if thereby they could get hold of his gold.

It was this knowledge which made Wun Lung so troubled and uneasy right now.

In addition, outside the walls was that terrible American, Buffalo Bill. All other Americans of whom the Celestial had knowledge were not to be feared like that one man. That Buffalo Bill would contrive in some way to get at him, even there in his own house, behind the village walls, was believed by Wun Lung, and it unnerved him.

That belief may have come largely because his nerves had been so shaken by what he had gone through. At the gate they had failed him utterly; and now while lying here on his silken cot he felt himself trembling inwardly, in a manner new and strange. And the magic mirror had been broken! That was a calamity bespeaking others to follow swiftly on its heels.

He had brought the magic mirror from China, where it had been given him by a wonder worker whom he had once helped. He did not himself understand its powers,

though he had used them; yet he knew that if a man looked steadily at the mirror and the ball spinning in front of it he soon lost his own will and accepted the will of the one who held the mirror. It was hypnotism, but Wun Lung did not know it; to him it was "magic." But the mirror had been broken! In his rage he had lost control of himself and hurled it at the American, and now it was shattered in many pieces! If there was a spirit, or god, for that mirror, its wrath would no doubt descend on him.

After a time Wun Lung arose from his cot and going to a window looked forth. The village was sprinkled with fires and the stars were out; the time was night.

Slowly the Chinaman came to a decision; then proceeded to put it in execution. He wrapped himself in thicker clothing, for the night air threatened to be chill, and took his way toward one of the gates, leaving the house by a rear exit, without notifying any one.

He saw that there was much excitement in the village; people were gathered here and there in knots, and stood in groups before the houses of Indian chiefs and of some of the principal Chinamen.

Wun Lung kept his head averted, and spoke to no one, until he reached the gate, when he called to one of the guards, commanding the fellow to come down.

The guard was a Chinaman, one of Wun Lung's friends and supporters. To him the crafty Celestial told a few lies, the point of which was that he wanted to slip out into the hills and look round, to see what the Americans out there were doing.

This gave him prompt exit from the town.

Having slipped out quietly, he walked stealthily along the wall until he came to the nearest corner. Near it was a group of trees, and he hastened into their shadows, believing himself still unseen; then shaped his course silently toward the hills.

But Wun Lung had not only been seen, he was being followed.

Hardly a minute after he had passed through the gate the Indian chief, Lion Tail, came up to it; and was permitted to pass out, giving much the same reason, that he wanted to scout round and see what the white men outside were doing. The guard no more thought of refusing this to Lion Tail than he had thought of refusing it to Wun Lung himself.

Wun Lung had not planned with wisdom; otherwise he would have taken care to see that he would not be followed. Though he feared the knowledge which Lion Tail had received in the words of the American, yet he did not think of this danger, that the chief would shadow him, to know more about that gold of which there was said to be so great a store.

When Wun Lung went on toward the hills Lion Tail followed him, silent, skulking, with all of an Indian's stealth; and Wun Lung did not know it.

The Celestial was heading for the spot where he had hidden the gold taken from the cache as well as the gold and diamonds he had collected before that. There had not been a Mexican cartload of the cache gold, but enough to excite cupidity, and it was all in that secret storehouse—queer vessels of gold and of silver, of a kind the Chinaman had never seen, being the loot of Mexican churches together with a number of gold nuggets.

When Wun Lung reached the spot where his treasure had been hidden, his first discovery was that some one had been at it; then he felt a hand on his throat. At that, terror smote him again, his knees gave way under him, and he sank down with a choking moan, quickly losing consciousness.

Lion Tail was not a dozen yards away at the time and his keen ears caught the moaning sound. After that, for a minute, he stood rigid as a bronze statue, straining his eyes through the darkness without seeing anything.

When he heard nothing more following the groan and what had seemed a smothered fall, he concluded that the Chinaman had fainted. This seemed not so unlikely, in view of the fact that Wun Lung had dropped in his tracks by the gate that very afternoon, and might be conjectured not to have recovered entirely from it. Anyway, the Indian could think of no other probable cause. Perhaps the gold had been hidden there and was now found to be gone, and the shock had flattened the Celestial out again. Lion Tail had heard no sound to suggest that enemies were near.

Drawing his tomahawk, the Indian went forward slowly, like a cat picking her way when she has scented a mouse or seen a bird; he made no sign. At each yard of advance he stopped and stared before him into the thick darkness; and he saw nothing.

"Ugh!" he grunted to himself.

It was very strange; but he thought he was prepared, and could not be surprised; while he was now pretty well assured that the Chinaman had fallen in a faint.

By and by he saw the body of the Chinaman lying stretched across a hole, from which yellow earth had been recently scratched. He had not much light, but his keen eyes could make that out. It seemed proof that his conjecture was right—that here was the hidden cache, which had been tampered with, and the discovery had knocked the weak-hearted Celestial senseless.

Lion Tail stuck his tomahawk back into his belt and stooped, to run his hands over the unconscious Chinaman.

Then an astonishing thing happened.

Right out of the ground, as it seemed, or out of that yellow hole, a hand shot up, as if it were the hand of the Chinaman himself. It caught the Indian by the throat with a grip that seemed to crush the very muscles of his

neck; and he was jerked flat on his face, on top of the unconscious Celestial. Before he could rise, or yell, or do anything, a revolver butt rapped heavily on his head above the forehead, where his hair was shaved away, and he sank down like a lump of lead.

A man arose out of the hole, pushing aside the forms of the Indian and the Chinaman; while two other men, and an Indian boy, came crawling quietly out of the bushes. The first was Buffalo Bill; the others were Nick Nomad, Old Weasel-top and Little Cayuse.

"Er, waugh!" Nomad was heard to grunt. "Yer got 'em both! Buffler ferever!"

"The rope, quick," said the scout, "before they have a chance to come to themselves."

The old trapper swished a riata forward; then helped the scout in securing the prisoners.

"It was the cleverest bit of work I ever seen done," declared Weasel-top, with intense admiration.

They gathered around their prisoners, who were still unconscious, the Chink being senseless from the choking he had been given and the Indian from that rap on the head.

"They'll come out of it in a little while," said the scout quietly; "and now I think we've got the game pretty well in our hands. When we found this cache I knew that soon it would be visited; it isn't possible for any man to hide treasure in this manner and not come to look at it, when he knows men are roaming round close by it and may stumble on it at any time."

"Buffler, yer head fer correct figgerin' goes ahead o' any I ever met up with," asserted Nomad in deep admiration. "But yer warn't expectin' that two would be comin', one sneakin' along arter t'other."

"No; we had better luck than we expected. I thought Wun Lung would come, for it was his cache; but this other fellow was a surprise."

"Who is he?" asked Weasel-top.

"Him Lion Tail," said Little Cayuse, whose eyes were of the keenest.

"You're right, I reckon," said the scout; "but we'll run a little risk, and make sure of it."

He stooped over the Indian; then under cover of his hat he struck a match and flashed its light down into the face of the prisoners, at the same time getting a look at the Celestial.

"Wun Lung and Lion Tail," he said, punching the match into the ground and extinguishing it. "Nothing could have been luckier; we've got the leader of the Chinks and probably the leading chief of the Indians."

"Buffler luck!" chuckled Nomad.

"An' now what?" asked Weasel-top anxiously.

"Your daughter is in the village; that message she sent proves it; and perhaps Flagg came through that affair this afternoon alive; we thought he was still kicking when they went dragging him through the streets."

"Er, waugh! Thet war a time when I wanted wings! Ef I'd had 'em, I'd been right inter ther midst o' thet mob. As 'twar, we war too fur off ter do anything. But thar'll be some dead Chinks and Injuns, ter pay fer Flagg, ef so be he has went under."

"You have a plan now?" said Weasel-top. "My daughter was alive when she sent that message; but we can't tell what has happened since."

"True, we can't; but we shall hope for the best," said the scout.

He stood looking down from the hillside at the lights within the walls of the town. Suddenly his resolution was taken.

"When we discovered that Wun Lung was coming here to look at his cache, my idea was to hold him as a hostage, and demand the surrender of Flagg and your daughter."

"It's a good plan yet," said Weasel-top.

"But perhaps we can do even better than that, since we have taken two prisoners."

"In what way?"

"I'd like mighty to take this Chinese smuggler back with me as a prisoner; that's what I came here for, you know! If we use him as a hostage, and they surrender their prisoners, we shall have to give him up to them; and then we'd have to go away without him. So, I've thought perhaps we could use Lion Tail as the hostage, and surrender him for the prisoners. If that don't work we can then use Wun Lung."

Nomad agreed that it was not a bad idea, though Old Weasel-top hesitated.

"I'd be willin' to surrender a hundred prisoners, if I had 'em, to get my daughter out of that place!" he declared.

"Yes; so would I!" the scout agreed. "That is, if it was necessary. But perhaps we can do it as well by using this Indian chief as if we used both him and the Chinaman. Of course, until we know they will not trade the prisoners to us for Lion Tail we'll have to keep the Chinese there from knowing that we have captured Wun Lung."

The Indian began to stir, coming from under the effect of that blow on the head.

"He's got a hard skull," said the scout. "From appearances, he'll be a pretty lively sort of flea in a few minutes. Better get a gag ready, Nomad; we'll use it on him, if we have to."

Nomad cut another length from the riata, and by combining it with a stick got a gag ready for the chief.

Throughout it all Old Weasel-top was struggling bravely with his insane desire to throw himself upon the Chinaman and finish him. He regarded Wun Lung as the author of all the ills which had befallen himself and his daughter, and he had registered a solemn vow that

he would kill the Chinaman at the first opportunity. It was only loyalty to a solemn promise given to Buffalo Bill which enabled him to hold his burning rage in check.

## CHAPTER XI.

### CONCLUSION.

Bearing aloft the blanket and tomahawk of Lion Tail, Buffalo Bill rode Bear Paw slowly down the hill toward the nearest gate of the walled town of the Pacheco Indians. On top of the blanket and tomahawk rested a white handkerchief, as a flag of peace.

He was seen by the Chinese and Indians in the town as soon as he appeared on the hillside. The morning was bright, and a horseman could be made out at a long distance. A flutter of excitement ran through the town when it was discerned that the white horseman bore a flag of truce.

Hidden in a clump of sage near enough to the gate and the wall to do deadly work with his rifle lay old Nick Nomad, like a rattlesnake ready to strike. He had crept there some time before; his purpose being to shoot down any one who tried, from the gate or the wall, to get the "drop" on Buffalo Bill.

When Buffalo Bill came within long rifle shot of the gate he drew rein, not caring to go nearer, and waved the white flag, at the same time holding up the blanket and the tomahawk.

As he did this Little Cayuse and Old Weasel-top brought Lion Tail into view on the hillside behind the scout, putting him out in a position where the villagers could not fail to see and recognize him.

The stir which followed in the town was something prodigious.

Buffalo Bill sat on Bear Paw, waving his white flag.

Following the stir in the village the nearest gate was thrown open and two men, an Indian chief and a Chinaman, came forth, on foot.

Standing by the gate they beckoned to the scout; but his only reply was to wave the flag, and hold up the blanket and tomahawk.

Seeing that he could not be enticed close to the walls, the Indian and the Chinaman came running out toward him, halting when they were thirty or forty yards off.

They were now where they could see Lion Tail plainly; so knew that so far as he was concerned here was no deception.

Buffalo Bill still refusing to advance nearer the Indian and the Chinaman came closer; so that they could hear the words of the scout, which he shouted at them.

"We have captured the chief, Lion Tail," he told them. "You hold as prisoners a white girl and a white man. We will trade the chief for your prisoners."

The Chinaman now came on alone, until he was within easy speaking distance.

"Melican man come down gate and talk," he said.

"Not on your life!" the scout told him. "Yonder is the chief; you can see him, and the people in the town can see him. I want you to go back and say to the Indians that we demand the surrender of the two white prisoners at once; otherwise, we shall kill the chief."

"Melican man come down talk-talk by gate," appealed the Chinaman.

"No!" the scout shouted at him. "You have our demand. If the friends of Lion Tail want him killed, all right; but if they don't, let them send out the white prisoners."

The Chinaman retreated, and he and the Indian turned to go back.

As they did so an Indian marksman who had climbed to the wall began to creep along it, dragging his musket, evidently with the intention of getting into a position where he could shoot the scout.

But old Nomad was not napping; a puff of smoke flew out of the sage brush where he lay, and with the explosion of his rifle a cube of mud jumped out of place under the rifleman's stomach as he crept along the wall. With a howl the rascal tumbled off the wall into the town. Nomad had not hurt him, but had taught the people there that they could play no tricks.

"You red nigger, I could er got you jes' as easy as ter knock ther dirt out frum under ye!" Nomad snarled, as he rolled away from the place where he had fired the shot, expecting a return bullet.

The excitement in the town grew more intense after that.

When about five minutes had gone by two Indian chiefs rode out of the gate, with feathers fluttering, the plumes showing that they were chiefs of high rank. They raced their ponies up the hillside, drawing rein when they were still some distance away.

"We like talk Lion Tail!" one of them bellowed.

"All right," the scout shouted back; "one of you can—but only one; that is enough to get his message."

One of them came on, swerving round the scout, and rode on to the point where Old Weasel-top and Little Cayuse held the captured chief.

Apparently the Indian wanted to be sure that the prisoner was Lion Tail. When he sat looking at the bound and helpless chief his doubts, if he had any, passed. Lion Tail was bound hand and foot, with a riata round his waist securing him to a small tree. The man and the Indian boy who had him in charge were armed, and kept their rifles pointed at the mounted redskin.

"Well, ye see him, I reckon?" said Old Weasel-top. "Say what ye got to say, and pike out."

Lion Tail, not gagged at the time, but very much frightened, began to beg his brother chief to do what the white

men said, telling him in his own tongue that the white men would undoubtedly carry out their threat of killing him if the white prisoners in the village were not brought out and delivered up.

Lion Tail said nothing about Wun Lung; both because he disliked the Chinaman, with whom more than once he had quarreled, and because he had been told that if he spoke of Wun Lung he would be shot down at once.

Wun Lung at the moment lay bound and gagged a half mile or more away, in a secluded spot, perfectly helpless, yet knowing that Buffalo Bill did not intend to release him.

When the chief saw that no deceit had been used, and had heard the despairing appeal of Lion Tail, he turned his horse and rode back, joining his companion, who had remained in waiting. Then they wheeled their ponies and rode down to the gate.

Ten minutes after that a delegation of Indians appeared at the gate, with Flagg and the girl in their midst, coming in strong enough force, as they believed, to rescue the chief if the white men tried to play double.

Buffalo Bill forced all of them to keep their distance as they sought to come on up the hill, and a shot from his revolver tearing into a tree near them told them that he meant what he said, when he declared he would shoot down whoever tried to come nearer.

He commanded them to release the prisoners, saying that when they did so his friends would release Lion Tail.

The prisoners were released and started up the hillside alone; then the bonds being cast from the limbs and body of Lion Tail, that scared chieftain began to streak it toward his friends.

If the Indians had meant treachery, the daring attitude of Buffalo Bill kept them from attempting it.

Flagg and Calton's daughter came on, running as fast as they could, and soon were near enough to be well under cover of the scout's revolvers.

The scout's plan had worked; he had retained Wun Lung as his prisoner; and eventually landed him in jail, thus accomplishing the thing he had set out to do.

As for the treasure in Wun Lung's cache, the silver and gold vessels were found to have been looted from a church in the little Mexican town of Santa Catalina, and were returned. The diamonds were surrendered to the authorities.

The rest of the gold of the Indian cache, which had never been Wun Lung's, was given by agreement of all the party to Eben Calton, Old Weasel-top; and later he presented it to his daughter Ethel, as her wedding portion, when she became the wife of Lem Flagg.

THE END.

Next week's issue will be No. 422, "Buffalo Bill's Aztec Guide; or, The White Indian."

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## PIONEERS IN PERIL.

"Get to cover, Elsie! Quick, lass!" exclaimed Jim Paterson. "The Redskins are on our trail—p'raps close behind us. They warned me at Fort Albany that Thundercloud and his braves had risen!"

As though to confirm his words the faint report of a rifle was heard amid the pine woods. Elsie Paterson—Jim's young wife—shuddered as she crouched down among the packages, their worldly possessions, that were littered on the ground.

"Perhaps it is Harold they are firing at," she exclaimed. "If it is, Jim, you must go to help him."

"And leave you here unprotected?" replied Jim. "Hal wouldn't thank me for that!"

"But would the Indians hurt a woman, Jim? They are not cowards—"

"You're new to the country, and don't know, Elsie," said Jim. "They are not cowards in a fight, I'll admit, but on the warpath they're merciless."

"Hark! another shot!"

The second sounded closer than the first. It was followed by a sharp cry, a wild yell of rage.

Jim Paterson laughed grimly.

"That last shot was from Harold's revolver," he said; "It's got a peculiar snap. He has scored a hit. Hal's all right, I guess. He knows how to take care of himself."

Jim and Elsie Paterson and Hal Warwick—Elsie's young brother—had been traveling across prairies and through forests *en route* to their new home in western Canada; a home, that is, which had yet to be made on the land that Jim Paterson had purchased from the government.

The name given, in a sort of vague way, to the thousand acres of grass and timbered land that Jim had acquired was Red Pine; and he, his young wife, and Hal Warwick were the pioneer settlers to this part of the country. They were going farther to the northwest than any white settlers had ever been before; and consequently they had to face the risks which all pioneers must be prepared to take in a wild country.

When but five days' journey from their destination, for instance, their horses had been stampeded, and their wagon set on fire, by a band of marauding Indians who had swooped down on them during the night. They had been encamped

by Great Bear Gulch, a narrow and deep ravine, which split the earth in an irregular formation for a distance of a hundred and sixty miles, and which had to be roughly bridged with tree trunks to enable them to get to the other side.

Of course, their goods had to be unloaded before the wagon could be dragged across, and it was due to this fact that they had saved their property when the raid occurred and the wagon was burned.

Where they had camped a single tree bridged the chasm, but this, of course, would have to be supplemented by others before they could get the heavy packages to the other side. As this task was beyond the powers of a man and a boy, Harold had set off early that morning on the back trail to the barrack of the Northwest Mounted Police to obtain some help, and to see if their horses could be recovered.

But he must have been intercepted by the redskins before he had covered half the distance, and now Jim and Elsie were anxiously awaiting his reappearance.

"Jim, I ought to have a weapon to defend myself with," exclaimed Elsie suddenly, "if—if these Indians are as bad as you say they are."

"I have the rifle, and Hal has the revolver," replied Jim, "and that is all the weapons we possess. You can trust me to defend you, Elsie, so long as I have the strength to press a trigger or drive home a knife; but if it comes to the worst— But we won't look on the black side yet. Let us hope that the sound of firing will reach the ears of a mounted police patrol or some white hunters, who will come to our assistance."

Occasional shots were still heard, nearly all from rifles, though twice the distinctive report of a revolver reached them from out of the timber. Evidently Harold was holding his own, dodging his assailants among the trees, and trying to work round to the little camp, which was certain to be the redskins' objective.

But although a revolver is a most effective weapon at close quarters, it is, of course, not to be compared to a rifle for long-range business; and the chances that Hal Warwick would escape his savage foes seemed very remote indeed.

Presently the sounds of firing ceased altogether. There followed an ominous and almost death-like silence. Elsie, her nerves strung to a painful tension, stood up and bent her head forward in a listening attitude.

"They must have killed him," she wailed. "My poor brother!"

"Hush!"

Jim held up his hand warningly. Every sense on the alert, he waited, listened, and watched. He heard a rustle of dead leaves, but that may have been a reptile moving. Then the breaking of a twig.

"Lie down behind the bales, Elsie," he whispered suddenly. The girl obeyed, and Jim also stretched himself flat on the ground, resting the barrel of his rifle on the packages.

There followed another period of silent waiting, of dreadful suspense; and then the air was split by a blood-curdling yell. Crack! crack! crack! went a score of rifles, and bullets ripped the ground all round them.

Redskins, armed to the teeth, broke from the cover of the woods, rushed across the intervening space of open ground, firing as they ran. Jim, who had a magazine rifle, returned the fire steadily and rapidly. Three of the Indians dropped, and this for the time being checked the rush.

Rallied by their chief, a big warrior with a long head-dress of hawk's feathers, they made another dash forward. Jim fired as rapidly as he could press the trigger, right into the thick of them. Two more rolled over. Then, to his dismay, Jim realized that his magazine was empty!

A young brave, anxious to distinguish himself, had rushed on in advance of the other red men, brandishing a tomahawk. He was vicious-looking and evil-eyed. Jim clubbed his rifle to meet his attack to the death. But while this warrior, his eyes glaring with the lust of blood, was still seven or eight paces away from the barricade, a shot rang

out from the other side of the gulch, and a revolver bullet checked his career for good and all. He leaped into the air, then pitched forward on his face. There he lay on the ground, with his arms stretched out in front of him, motionless; in one single instant having passed from vigorous life to the oblivion of death.

A yell of vengeful fury broke from the redskins, and was answered by a shout of defiance from the youth who had fired the shot—Hal Warwick.

Hal's clear, boyish voice rang out high and courageous as he called to Jim Paterson: "Load up again, Jim, and we'll hold them off until help comes. Cheer up, Elsie; we'll come out of this scrimmage ahead yet."

Unnoticed by friends or foes, Hal had contrived to creep up within revolver range, and had taken cover behind a big boulder of rock, which was leaning up against the trunk of a tree. And it is quite possible that his cheery optimism would have been justified, and the redskins held in check, had not Jim inadvertently raised himself a little in order to refill the magazine of his rifle, and in so doing exposed his head to view above the bales. In an instant half a dozen shots rang out, but only one took effect.

Jim had the feeling of a red-hot iron searing the side of his head; he staggered to his feet; scarcely knowing what he was doing; blood ran into his eyes and half blinded him; he heard Elsie's cry of despair, a shout of triumph from the redskins, and then everything, noises and sights alike, became indistinct, and for a time he knew nothing more of what was taking place around him.

He was unconscious probably no longer than eight or ten minutes; and when he recovered his senses he found that he was sitting on the ground with his back against one of the bales, his wife was kneeling by his side, and Thundercloud, the Indian chief, was standing over him, contemplating him with a look of savage and malignant satisfaction.

"What has happened, Elsie?" asked Jim weakly.

It was Thundercloud who answered. He spoke in English. "This has happened, paleface," he said. "The red men have dug up the hatchet which has been too long buried. They are going to regain the land which has been stolen from them, and drive the palefaces back into their cities."

"Big words, Thundercloud," replied Jim scornfully, "but your deeds don't match with them. Last night your braves crept up, like snakes out of a bush, stole our horses, and burned our wagon. We had done you no harm; we had no hatred in our hearts against red men—"

"What matter all this?" interrupted the chief. "Have I not said that the red men have dug up the hatchet? It is enough. You are one of those who steal our land. You are one of those who build great huts, who cut down the trees, and drive the deer and buffalo from the forests and the prairies. You have killed some of my warriors. Therefore you shall die—you and those that are with you."

"You are only a coward, after all," exclaimed Jim. "You, who name yourself a brave warrior. You will burn a lot of powder; you will no doubt murder a number of defenseless men and women. And then you will feel the vengeance of the white men, whom you will never drive out of this land, Thundercloud. Indeed, it may be that the Riders of the Plain are already on your trail."

By the "Riders of the Plain" Jim referred to the Northwest Mounted Police.

"Paleface dog," replied the chief, his eyes blazing with anger, "you have looked your last upon the sun. This place shall be the grave of you and yours." He pointed to the gloomy depths of Great Bear Gulch. "Thundercloud has spoken!"

Whether it was his intention to kill his two white captives there and then cannot be known, but it happened that one of his braves attracted his attention by firing a shot at Hal Warwick, who was peering round the edge of the boulder to see what was going on.

"Let the boy be captured alive," he ordered. "His death

must not be a quick and painless one. He shall die at the torture stake."

The warrior thus spoken to set his foot upon the tree which bridged the gully, and others prepared to follow him across. But Harold knew better than to allow them to cross. He leveled his revolver and fired. The leading warrior uttered a loud cry, staggered, fell right across the end of the log, and there hung, his head and arms on one side, and his legs on the other.

A frightful yell broke from the Indians, and while several of them kept up a hot fire on the boulder that was Hal's cover, Thundercloud himself and another brave attempted to cross the insecure log bridge, firing as they advanced.

Jim had sunk back into a state of semi-unconsciousness again, due to pain and loss of blood, although Elsie had contrived to roughly bandage the wound. She, poor girl, was almost frantic with despair. She called out to her brother to save himself, and leave them to their fate, but that indomitable youth shouted in reply: "Not me. None of us are dead yet, Elsie. Collar hold of Jim's rifle, and see what you can do with it."

Then having refilled the chambers of his revolver, he opened fire again, and bravely held the redskins in check.

But, after all, it could only have ended in one way, for he could not possibly have held his own much longer against such terrible odds. Then, when matters looked most desperate, and it seemed that the savage foe must triumph, a loud, ringing cheer suddenly dominated all other sounds, and a party of mounted men galloped into view. There were ten altogether. Four of them were mounted police, and the other six were prairie men and settlers, hastily gathered together.

They made short work of the redskins. The fight was sharp while it lasted, but it did not last more than ten minutes. Thundercloud was killed, and the death of that truculent chief put an end to the rising of the redskins.

"You're a plucky one, young 'un," said the sergeant of police to Harold; "we can do with as many of your sort in Canada as like to come over."

"Thanks," replied Hal. "You came along in the nick of time. I only had one more cartridge left."

\* \* \* \* \*

Jim and Elsie Paterson are now settled happily in their homestead at Red Pine, and a bright and prosperous future is in front of them.

Hal Warwick contemplates the purchase of a cattle ranch, for the rearing of cattle and breeding of horses presents to him more attractions than farming.

For Hal, though still in his teens, is a perfect horseman and a skilled shot; and the sergeant of mounted police at Fort Albany declared that it was a loss to the force that he had not joined it as a trooper.

Higher praise than that from such a man could not be given!

#### AN INDIAN COUNTRY FAIR.

On the banks of the Little Big Horn River, out in Montana, the harvest season marks the recurrence each year of the annual Crow Indian fair. This fair is unique in being the only one wholly Indian in management and participation, and it is an odd mixture of the old life and the new.

Out on the grounds the exhibit hall with the big pumpkins, the children's school display, bread, cakes and pies, vegetables and grain is extremely modern. The school band of Indian boys furnishes music. The Indian police force appears in blue uniforms and big stars.

The wagons are new, the buggies are shining and the harness heavily mounted. The horses are well groomed and swift. The greased pole and the tug of war, the potato race and the foot race have little attraction for the red man,

who is content with a feed, a horse race, a dance and plenty of personal toggery.

On the grand stand women wrapped in gay blankets, bright silk handkerchiefs tied over their heads, beaded moccasins on their feet, are jabbering Crow. On their backs there may be a papoose, carried in the old way. There are old men in blankets and skin shirts, brides in elk-tooth dresses worth several hundred dollars apiece.

The races are entirely free from betting and show wonderful horsemanship. Almost all ride bareback, the Indian boys sticking to their prancing, rearing horses as if glued to the spot. There may be twelve or thirteen entries, but never a grumble or a quarrel over the best position, and a proud Crow would despise any inducement to hold in his speedy little pony or slacken its pace even if he had left his competitors far behind in the dust of the course.

In the relay races the riders rush headlong into the stalls, are on the ground and onto another horse in an instant. The old buffalo hunters, half nude, bodies painted in grawsome designs, with bow and arrow and strange medicine charms, are not the least interesting as they dash past the grand stand.

In the camp life is at high tide. The tepees, crowding the river's bank, are the homes of some three to four thousand redskins and ten thousand dogs, while half as many horses graze on the hills above, guarded by solemn sentinels. In the open spaces boys and girls race about, reckless, excited and happy.

Children of four or six years of age clank about with heavy spurs, worn by no means for looks alone, for these children can sit a prancing, bucking pony without saddle or stirrups and just for sport dig their spurs into their horses' flanks to stir up a bucking and pitching contest.

Inside the tepees the squaws are preparing the meal over the open fire. Everywhere there is feasting, much chattering and gesticulating, bright colors and picturesque life. Not a few solemn ceremonies take place, with elaborate rites, which mean much to the primitive Indian mind.

The evenings are boisterous with the din of the tomtom, the powwow and dance songs. At night the camp is a weird, fascinating place of faint lights, dim shadows and shrill, creepy noises. In the dance tents hundreds join in the owl dance, the war dance and other ancient pastimes. The young bucks are stripped naked except for breech clout, their copper-colored skins painted in elaborate, fantastic designs.

Older men wear the regalia of their rank, gorgeous war bonnets, ermine and skins, dignified and reserved in their exalted positions. The squaws display much paint and bright-colored costumes. There are decorations of birds' bones, feathers, bells and eagle claws. Intermingled with the gaiety are many gifts, oratorical speeches and much counting of coos and relating of past deeds of daring.

#### BUSY LOT OF BEAVERS.

Superintendent Retallic, of Marquette's principal lighting station, who took several men to the Rainey Creek country to open beaver dams in order to release some of the water held up by them so that the supply in Dead River could be replenished, is of the opinion that the busiest lot of beavers to be found anywhere are at home in the district.

In Rainey Creek they have dams about every two hundred feet. About half a dozen dams were opened, with the result that the level of water in Dead River was appreciably raised, and at that Mr. Retallic has now learned that he missed the largest dams, located higher up the stream.

There are twenty-five or more distinct dams in the creek. As showing the capacity of beavers for woodworking, the superintendent relates the following incident: Close to the power station a family of beavers recently established them-

selves in the river and constructed a roomy house. One morning the past week the men found five trees that the beavers had cut down. The stump of the largest was nine inches through and the others were not much smaller. The next morning these trees had been cut up, branches and all, and used by the beavers in the construction of their house. The trunks had been cut accurately in four-foot lengths.

Beavers are protected by law, and of late years they have been rapidly increasing in numbers. There are hundreds of them in the colonies established in the Dead River district.

#### FISHING SUPERSTITIONS.

In British Columbia the Indians ceremoniously go out to meet the first salmon, and in flattering voices try to win their favor by calling them all chiefs.

Every spring in California the Karaks used to dance for salmon. Meanwhile one of their number secluded himself in the mountains and fasted for ten days. Upon his return he solemnly approached the river, took the first salmon of the catch, ate some of it, and with the remainder lighted a sacrificial fire. The same Indians laboriously climbed to the mountain top after the poles for the spearing booth, being convinced that if they were gathered where the salmon were watching no fish would be caught.

In Japan, among the primitive race of the Ainos, even the women left at home are not allowed to talk, lest the fish may hear and disapprove, while the first fish is always brought in through a window instead of a door, so that other fish may not see.

The Eskimo women of Alaska never sew while the men are fishing, and should any mending be imperative they do it shut up in little tents out of sight of the sea.

Under no circumstances on the northeast coast of Scotland will a fisherman at sea mention certain objects on land, such as "minister," "kirk," "swine," "dog," etc., and the line will surely be lost if a pig is seen while baiting it. As on the land chickens must not be counted until they are hatched, so at sea fish must not be counted until they are all caught.

It is good luck to find mice nibbling among the nets; a horseshoe nailed to the mast will help, and a herring caught and salted down will produce wonders.

In the Shetland Islands a cat must not be mentioned before a man baiting his line, and among the Magyars of Hungary a fisherman will turn back and wait over a tide if he meets a woman wearing a white apron.

Every year the natives of the Duke of York Island decorate a canoe with flowers and fern, fill it with shell money, and cast it adrift, "to compensate the fish for their fellows caught and eaten."

It was always the custom of the Maoris, the primitive inhabitants of New Zealand, to put the first fish that they caught back into the sea "with a prayer that it might tempt other fish to come and be caught."

#### THE WEDDING BASKET.

The wedding basket of the Paiutis Indians of Nevada is a very interesting affair, for without it the marriage ceremony of the tribe cannot be conducted. It is filled with a stiff mess of boiled corn meal. The Indian priest takes the basket and divides the porridge into equal parts. Calling for the bride, who up to that moment has hidden under her mother's blanket, he takes her hand, and also that of the groom. Assuming her position on the west side of the receptacle, with her future husband on the east, they eat the contents of the basket. This, with a few words from the priest, constitutes the ceremony, and youth and maid are man and wife.

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